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Take More Photos Whenever, Wherever



The Olympus Evolt E-510 digital SLR camera system includes everything you need to set out on your next photo-snapping adventure. Find out more on page 11!

Must-Have Guide To Buying A Digital Camera

Clean Power For Your HDTV

Luxury Home Theater

Protect Kids From Internet Threats & Give Parents Peace-Of-Mind



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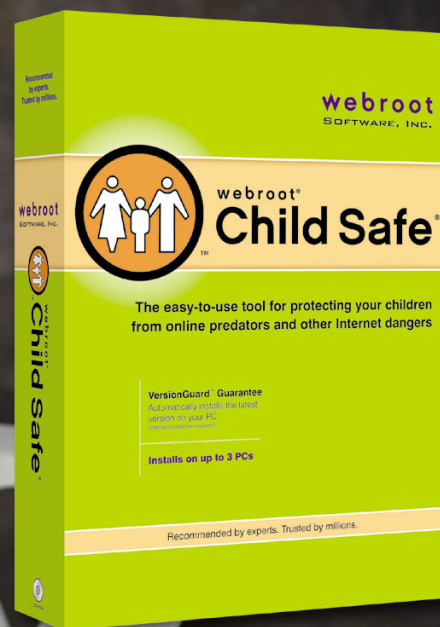
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Some exciting news
about Child Safe® is on the way!
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Child Safe® software provides parents with an easy-to-use tool for controlling and monitoring their kids' computer and Internet usage. Featuring simple setup and comprehensive protection, Child Safe® puts parents in charge of household PCs with customizable user profiles, scheduling, and time limits, as well as monitoring and reporting.

Why Child Safe® is the right choice for families with PCs

- Easily set restrictions on computer, Internet, and program usage
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- Customize access/usage restrictions for different users
- Prevent children from changing PC settings and adding programs
- Monitor computer, Internet, and program usage with customized reports
- Installs on up to three PCs at one time
- Free customer support via phone and email and free program updates for one year

Cover Story

- 11 Take Great Pictures Your Way**
The Olympus Evolt E-510 Makes Taking Great Photos A Snap

On Our Cover:
Featured on our cover this month is
Olympus' Evolt E-510 (\$999).

Open

There's always something new and interesting happening in the world of consumer electronics. You'll hear about it all in *First Glimpse's* Open section.

14 CE News

Lifestyle Close-Up: Digital Camera Buying Guide

Today's digital cameras are some of the most fun and affordable CE devices on the market, but with so many to choose from, the buying process could get a bit confusing. In this month's issue of *First Glimpse*, we tell you everything you need to know about shopping for your new digital camera, including what modes are best for what lifestyles, what size of prints you can make, and how much battery life you can expect.

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Home Theater

Everyone wants a sleek, stylish HDTV to accent his or her home, but many folks just don't know where to start when it comes to actually buying one. Whether you're looking for a quick glossary of terms, shopping tips, or must-have accessories, check out Home Theater for quick tips on making your hi-def experience the best it can be.

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Digital Imaging

Digital cameras and camcorders are changing the way we record the moments of our lives, from quick snapshots of favorite vacation spots to priceless video clips of first steps and other important milestones. Get to know your new digicam or



camcorder and learn what to do with your photos and video once you have them.

44 Digital Imaging Shopping Tips: Buying A Camera Case

45 Digital Cameras: 5 Must-Have Accessories

46 Digital Cameras: Top 5 Things To Know

47 Digital Imaging Glossary

48 to 53 Digital Imaging Comparison Charts: Digital Cameras; Digital Camcorders; Photo Printers

Computers

Whether you love 'em or hate 'em, almost everyone uses a computer sometime during his or her day. Even if you don't, chances are your spouse or kids do. In this section, you can familiarize yourself even more with this ubiquitous CE device, and we'll also lighten things up a bit with monthly looks at cool notebook computers and home printers.

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63 Glossary Of Computing Terms

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Wireless

We're willing to bet that you can't part with your cell phone, iPod, or both. In this section, we'll tell you about everything you need to know about mobile phones and their service plans, and we also cover MP3 players and the cool accessories that go with them. If you love the feeling of freedom you get with no wires or cords, this section is for you.

68 What MP3 Player Is Best For You?: Find Out With This Handy Quiz

69 iPod Accessory Must-Haves: Deck Out Your iPod

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CE Lite

Most CE devices are all about fun. Check out each month's Exit page for cool gift ideas for loved ones—and for yourself.

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Editor's Note

It's no secret that my personal favorite type of CE device is a digital camera. Compact, D-SLR, it doesn't matter: I love the creativity and freedom a camera gives its user. As someone who is expecting her first child very soon, I plan on using my camera almost constantly for the next few months.

But investing in a digital camera is still a somewhat daunting process. There are many things to consider, including price, style, megapixels, print sizes, accessories, battery life, and on and on. The lingo can be confusing, too. That's why this month's *First Glimpse* is full of useful information telling you exactly what you need to know when you're taking the plunge and shopping for a new camera.

Personally, I think my next CE purchase is going to be a D-SLR camera. With a kiddo on the way, I know I'll use it constantly, and I have to admit I had a great time playing with the Olympus Evolt E-510 that's on this month's cover. My birthday is next month, too. Hmm. . .



Live well, friends.

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First Glimpse Special Product Section

This special product section is produced in partnership with leading consumer electronics manufacturers and allows us to provide readers with the most timely product information possible. Browse through these First Glimpse pages to learn about the latest hot products.

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Special Product Section

Canon EOS 30D

MSRP: \$1,499

www.canonusa.com

Available at select Best Buy™ stores
and www.bestbuy.com



Perfection Refined

Canon's new EOS 30D brings proven EOS technology to a new level, giving photographers an unbeatable photographic experience. The EOS 30D incorporates a host of new features with Canon's highly acclaimed 8.2MP CMOS sensor and DIGIC II image processor. The EOS 30D includes enhanced operational features such as a new 2.5-inch LCD, true spot metering, a durable new shutter mechanism, and Canon's Picture Style feature, all in a sturdy, magnesium-clad body. With all these new features, the EOS 30D is true perfection, refined.

Other features include:

- Exceptional D-SLR with exclusive 8.2MP Canon CMOS sensor and DIGIC II Image Processor
- User-selectable high-speed and low-speed continuous shooting at 5fps (frames per second) or 3fps—up to 30 (JPEG), 11 (RAW), or nine (RAW and JPEG) consecutive frames when set at 5fps and fast 0.15-second startup time
- Large 2.5-inch LCD that can be viewed at extreme angles up to 170 degrees
- New and improved features: Picture Style for superior command of in-camera color, contrast and sharpness, spot metering and shutter durability of approximately 100,000 cycles
- Impressive 9-point wide-area AF with a dual precision sensor at the center
- One-touch direct printing and improved PictBridge features, including more custom print effects and printing with shooting information
- Fully compatible with all EF and EF-S Lenses and a wide range of EOS System accessories

Canon PowerShot SD750 Digital ELPH

MSRP: \$299.99

www.usa.canon.com

Available at select Best Buy™ stores and www.bestbuy.com



Combine Function With Style

Canon's iconic ELPH design achieves a new evolution with the PowerShot SD750 Digital ELPH. Take magnificent photos with this 7.1MP digicam and benefit from advanced features such as a DIGIC III Image Processor, Face Detection Technology, red-eye correction, and time-lapse movies. Always sized to go, the SD750 is now extra durable, with a tough, scratch-resistant coating on its antireflective, PureColor 3-inch LCD. Simplify the task of sharing photos with a Print/Share button for easy direct printing and downloading. With a stylish body design offered in silver or black and silver and a 3X optical zoom lens, you'll find the SD750 offers both excellent form and function.

Other SD750 features include:

- Stylish 7.1MP Digital ELPH with 3X optical zoom lens
- A slim, contoured dual-tone design in two color variations to suit your personal style
- Extra-large, high-resolution 3-inch LCD with scratch-resistant, antireflection coating
- ISO 1600 and High ISO Auto to reduce image blur and expand low-light shooting capability
- Five movie modes, including 30fps (frames per second) VGA, Time Lapse, and Fast Frame Rate
- ID Photo Print and Movie Print with select PIXMA Photo Printers, CP, and SELPHY Compact Photo Printers
- DIGIC III Image Processor, Face Detection Technology, and red-eye correction

Canon

Canon EOS Digital Rebel XTi

MSRP: \$899.99

www.usa.canon.com

Available at select Best Buy™ stores and www.bestbuy.com



A D-SLR Camera That Maintains Control

The Canon EOS Digital Rebel XTi offers an unbeatable combination of performance, ease of use, and value. With its 10.1MP Canon CMOS sensor and DIGIC II Image processor, you'll be able to capture photos with exceptional clarity and tonal range. A host of features include a 2.5-inch LCD with a new user interface and wide viewing angle and the exclusive EOS Integrated Cleaning System featuring a Self Cleaning Sensor Unit, all in a lightweight, ergonomic body. The XTi offers image control via Canon's Picture Style technology settings and print control through a Print/Share button that allows advanced camera direct capabilities for direct printing.

Other XTi features include:

- 10.1MP Canon CMOS sensor and DIGIC II Image processor
- Large, 2.5-inch wide-angle LCD
- Fast, 3fps (frames per second) shooting with 27-frame burst and 0.2-second startup time
- High-precision, wide-area 9-point autofocus system
- EOS Integrated Cleaning System featuring a Self Cleaning Sensor Unit
- Fully compatible with over 60 EF and EF-S Lenses and a wide range of EOS System accessories
- Picture Style technology settings for a broad range of image control
- Print/Share button featuring advanced camera direct capabilities for direct printing user options

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Special Product Section



Olympus SP-550 UZ

MSRP: \$499

www.olympus.com

Available at select Best Buy™ stores and www.bestbuy.com



Never Miss Any Action

If you never want to miss the action, get the world's most powerful digital camera—the 7.1MP SP-550 UZ from Olympus. Its new 18X optical, wide-angle, super telephoto zoom lens gets you closer to your subject than is possible with any compact digital camera on the market. Dual Image Stabilization eliminates the blurs. And with high-speed sequential shooting and new Pre-Capture technology, you'll capture fast motion like a pro. Thanks to its Bright Capture feature, you can even shoot in low light without a flash, and it's easy to preview, shoot, and share with the camera's large 2.5-inch, high-resolution LCD.

Other features include:

- 15fps (frames per second) high-speed sequential shooting lets you shoot fast-action sequences like a pro. You can take several shots in rapid succession to capture every moment of the action. With a burst rate of up to 15fps, you can freeze moments in time to get the shot you want.
- Pre-Capture begins working as soon as the focus is locked, automatically archiving five frames in the camera's buffer

memory prior to the shutter release, so you're sure to capture the perfect shot even if your reaction time is slow.

- The SP-550 UZ offers the highest sensitivity of any ultra zoom—up to ISO 5000. Combine with shutter speeds of up to 1/2,000 second to capture fast-action photos, like sports and pets, with ease.
- Full manual exposure control provides creative control for advanced users, yet it's easy enough for any family member to shoot beautiful images.
- Getting the best shot has never been easier. Preset shooting modes optimize the camera's settings for any shooting situation to ensure you capture a great shot. Select scene modes such as Portrait, Landscape, Night Scene, Sports, Beach & Snow, Underwater, and more. You can also record TV-quality AVI movies with sound up to the capacity of your xD card.

OLYMPUS®

Kensington Universal FM Transmitter for MP3 Players

MSRP: \$49.99

us.kensington.com

Available at select Best Buy™ stores and www.bestbuy.com



Connect Your MP3 Player & Car Stereo

Listen to your favorite tunes the next time you go for a drive with Kensington's Universal FM Transmitter for MP3 Players, which is compatible with any MP3 player with a 3.5mm jack output. Its ClearFM technology reduces audio noise, allowing you to listen to enhanced wireless audio quality and FM reception. Three preset buttons and a bright display let you store FM stations quickly and easily, and if that wasn't enough, no batteries are needed because the transmitter is powered via your car power outlet.

Other features include:

- Station information displayed on transmitter screen
- Enhanced audio and FM reception with ClearFM technology
- Plays portable MP3 music on any open FM radio frequency
- Three preset buttons for radio station favorites
- No batteries necessary; the transmitter is powered by a car power outlet
- Backed by a one-year Kensington warranty

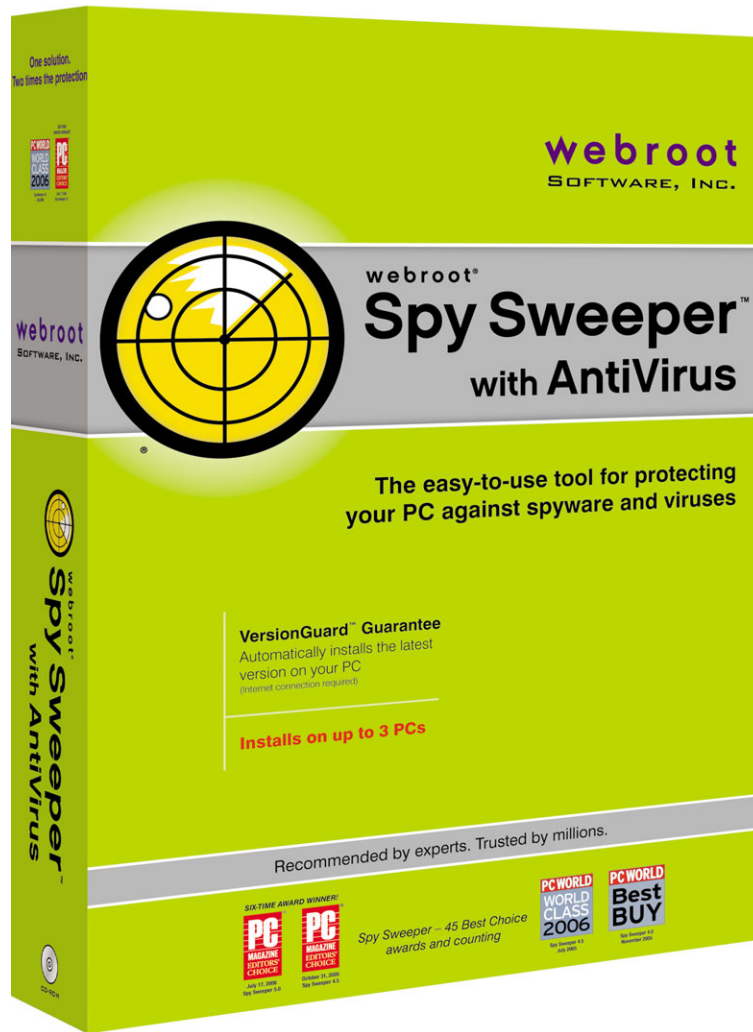


**Webroot® Spy Sweeper™
with AntiVirus**

MSRP: \$49.95

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Keep Your PC Spyware- & Virus-Free With One Click

Webroot® Spy Sweeper with AntiVirus offers combined protection at a better value than suites or two standalone products. It provides complete security from the two most dangerous threats in a single, easy-to-use solution.

With advanced detection and removal capabilities, even the most dangerous files are removed in a single sweep. You will not have to scan and restart your PC repeatedly with Webroot Spy Sweeper with AntiVirus—one sweep, and your PC is clean.

Additionally, Webroot Spy Sweeper with AntiVirus uses advanced smart shields that can detect, remove, and block Internet viruses, spyware, and worms in real time—ensuring overall system performance.

Other features include:

- Award-winning antispysware and powerful antivirus protection
- Effective, easy-to-use protection from the most dangerous Internet threats
- Automatic defense updates keep you protected from the latest threats
- Windows Vista™ compatible

webroot
SOFTWARE, INC.



Antec Nine Hundred

MSRP: \$149

www.antec.com

Available at select Best Buy™ stores and www.bestbuy.com



A Case That Keeps It Cool

Antec's Nine Hundred is a versatile computer tower case that's customizable to fit your high-demand computing needs. Its advanced cooling method can tackle the hottest system, which makes it perfect for photo or video editing, as well as any graphic work. It offers three 120mm TriCool fans, as well as a large 200mm TriCool exhaust fan to keep hard drives from overheating. A perforated front bezel allows for maximum air intake, too. A useful tray is located on the case's top, which creates a perfect spot to stow your MP3 player, digicam, or any other CE device you use in conjunction with your computer. Two USB 2.0, one FireWire, and audio in/out ports are all located next to the case tray. With such easy access, you'll be able to digitize video or upload photos and files in no time.

Other features include:

- A classic black finish
- Fan mounts for additional cooling needs

- Two front-loaded hard drive disk cages for up to six hard drives
- Input/output ports top-mounted on the case for trouble-free access
- Seven expansion slots allow you to add new memory and graphics cards as needed
- 18.4x8.1x19.4 inches (HxWxD)

Antec
The Power of You



Take Great Pictures Your Way

The Olympus Evolt E-510 Makes Taking Great Photos A Snap

He's Father Of The Year—in your home, at least. His good dad deeds include taking the kids to swimming lessons, telling them campfire stories, playing ball, and bandaging scraped elbows, to name just a few.

Dad also deserves a special commendation for his photography skills. Using a point-and-shoot camera, he's managed to snap some amazing photos of the

kids in action; now he's ready to start using the advanced features that a D-SLR (digital single-lens reflex) camera offers. This Father's Day, Olympus has the gift Dad wants.

Ready For Action

The Olympus Evolt E-510 is a D-SLR camera. One of the most important advantages of an SLR camera (film or digital), is that the image you see through its viewfinder and the image that

appears when you take the picture are identical. Standard point-and-shoot camera viewfinders offer a slightly different view of your subject than your camera lens sees.

Another important benefit is that SLR cameras support multiple lenses. You can use the included 14-42mm lens to shoot photos of nearby subjects and then swap it with the 40-150mm lens (also included in the E-510's box) when you need to take pictures of subjects

that are far away. Olympus offers a complete line of extra lenses for the E-series of cameras.

The 10MP E-510 boasts an easy-to-navigate, on-screen menu and displays preview pictures for the camera's multiple modes. These scene modes automatically adjust the camera's settings for a particular type of scene, such as a portrait photo, an action shot, or fireworks. We like these scene modes because they let other family members (who may not have much experience with a high-end camera) take great pictures without mastering the camera's advanced features.

Thanks to the camera's TruePic III processor and 10MP Live-MOS imager, the E-510 takes shots quickly (it lets you snap multiple photos by simply holding the shutter button) and produces colorful, crisp images that are free of the blemishes you'll find in photos from lesser cameras.

Live View

Unlike point-and-shoot cameras, which generally let users view their subjects via an LCD, most D-SLRs have limited display capabilities. All D-SLRs have a standard optical viewfinder (just as you would find on a film SLR camera), but most can't display a live-action scene on their LCDs, as your point-and-shoot camera can. However Olympus' Live View feature lets the E-510 do just that: If you don't want to use your optical viewfinder, you can push a button and then see your live scene on the camera's LCD.

Thanks to Live View, you can compose great photos while holding the camera in unusual positions, such as when you need to lift the camera above a crowd. Richard Pelkowski, Product Manager for Digital SLRs at Olympus, tells us that even professional photographers love this feature. "A particular photographer has told us that it's a tremendous benefit and a completely different experience to

be able to look at a baby and make goo-goo eyes at her. She was telling me that when you put your eye up to the viewfinder and your face is hidden, the child's face just kind of goes blank and they're wondering, 'What the heck are you doing?' as opposed to being able to shoot off the hip, so to speak."

Image Stabilization

Image stabilization is one of the features that sets the E-510 apart from its smaller cousin, the E-410. A motorized device in the camera shifts the imager in several directions to counteract your hand's minute shaking. The feature is particularly helpful when you need to extend your lens to take shots of a faraway subject.

"You're at a stadium at night," says Pelkowski, setting the scene. "You've got some light, but it's not the greatest light, and you're using a really long lens so you can get down there, watching the pitcher wind up or somebody sliding into base. That's when image stabilization comes into play, where it really helps you get the shot. It's not blurry—it's sharp, it's totally in focus."

Because Olympus built the image stabilization device into the camera itself, your photos will benefit from the feature regardless of the lens you attach to your camera.

Dust Reduction

Unlike film SLR cameras, D-SLRs are extremely vulnerable to dust when you swap lenses. When you detach a lens, the camera's guts are exposed, including the filters that remove unwanted light before it reaches the camera's images sensor. If dust lands on these filters, it can cause image defects that will ruin your carefully shot photographs. As a result of this risk, photographers have to be very cautious when they detach lenses from many D-SLR cameras.

Olympus 100% Digital Zuiko Lenses

Olympus packages the Evolt E-510 with two lenses that let you get some great shots right out of the box. The lenses rely on high-quality ED glass elements to produce crisp, clear photos. Sure, you'll learn to use specialized lenses down the road, but you'll find yourself keeping this lens duo handy at all times, as they offer solid shooting performance for a wide range of situations.

Both lenses are members of Olympus' popular Digital Zuiko line, which

is built specifically for digital cameras. Thanks to these lenses, you can be sure that each pixel on your camera's imager will receive light via the lens, which is critical for your picture's color and contrast. Olympus designed the lenses to provide crisp images that don't blur at the edges. If you've handled D-SLR cameras before, you'll find that these lenses are significantly lighter and smaller than older lens models, making your E-510 that much easier to carry and use.

The Zuiko Digital ED 14-42mm is a digital zoom model that makes a great everyday lens and supports wide-angle shots. At your child's birthday party, you can snap pictures of nearby family members grilling hot dogs and then extend the lens to catch shots of the kids jumping into the pool. When your children perform in the school play, you'll find that the package's telephoto lens, the Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm, comes in handy, too. ●

However, Olympus D-SLRs include a Supersonic Wave Filter, which vibrates certain filters to shake dust from them at a speed of 35,000 times per second. The dust falls to containment areas that capture the loose debris. Although you'll want to continue to avoid dropping your open camera into the sand at a beach, you can swap lenses without worry on windy days.

All The Right Features

With the E-510, Olympus covered all the bases. It is sturdy and has a sizeable, easy-to-hold grip, but it's extremely small and light, which makes it a great day-to-day camera, as well as a welcome companion when you're going to be carrying camera equipment on long shoots in remote locations. It offers

plenty of storage, thanks to slots for CF and XD memory cards. Advanced amateur photographers will appreciate the E-510's great features and image quality, and anyone can appreciate the camera's \$999 price tag, which includes the E-510 body and two detachable lenses. **FC**

BY JOSHUA GULICK

Customize Your Camera

Cameras that have detachable lenses give you the most control over your pictures. Different lenses let you get close-up shots of faraway objects, shoot pictures in low light, and create special effects that add a unique look to your pics. As your photography skills grow, so will the number of lenses, flashes, and other camera accessories that you stuff into your backpack before you head out for the next shoot. To that end, Olympus offers a large (and growing) line of accessories that fit your Evolt E-510 camera like a glove.



Zuiko Digital ED 18-180mm F3.5-6.3

\$499.99 • Olympus

This zoom lens, which is the digital equivalent of a 36-360mm film camera lens, provides users with quality wide-angle and telephoto capabilities for a low price. As with many other Olympus Zuiko Series lenses, the 18-180mm lens uses ED lens elements to prevent the sorts of chromatic aberrations you might find in pictures shot with lenses that have lower-quality elements. The Digital ED is a great, compact lens that lets you leave the other lenses at home when you want to travel lightly.



Zuiko Digital ED 8mm F3.5 Fisheye

\$799.99 • Olympus

Ah, the fisheye lens. Thanks to this unusual digital camera lens, we can take pictures in which the subjects and background are slightly distorted, as though they were being viewed from, well, inside a fish bowl. The lens has a 180-degree field of view and lets you take pictures of objects as close as one inch from the lens. The lens also benefits from a protective coating that prevents ghosting problems.



Flash FL-36

\$199.99 • Olympus

The E-510 has a built-in flash that provides even lighting in many dark environments, but it's best only for taking pictures of subjects that are up to 10 feet away. If you're looking for a stronger, more customizable flash, put the FL-36 on your list: It is built specifically for digital cameras. The FL-36, which plugs directly into the hotshoe at the top of your camera, brightens your scene up to about 25 feet away from where you're shooting.

ce news

COMPILED BY RACHEL DEROWITSCH

Philips Buys Digital Lifestyle Outfitters

Royal Philips Electronics has announced plans to buy DLO (Digital Lifestyle Outfitters), an American company that makes accessories for MP3 and video players. The Netherlands-based Philips said it planned to make DLO part of the Peripherals & Accessories business unit in its Consumer Electronics division once the purchase of the company was complete sometime in the second fiscal quarter.

Last year, DLO sold an estimated \$100 million worth of products, including its popular Action Jacket and HomeDock. Globally, the market for MP3 player accessories surpassed \$4 billion in 2006, and that category of products grows more than 10% annually, according to Philips.



Microsoft Issues Limited-Edition Pink Zune

The Zune now has some zip. Microsoft has released a limited-edition pink version of its MP3 and video player (\$249; www.zune.net), adding a splash of color to the line of black, brown, and white versions of the Zune. The 30GB Zune can store an estimated 7,500 songs, 25,000 images, or 100 hours of video.

Microsoft spokesperson Kristin Oke says, "We're still considering launching additional colors of the Zune device, but we have nothing to announce at this time. Increasingly, technology design is mirroring fashion, and we are looking at trends in the coming fashion seasons as we develop new colors."



SimpleTech Hard Drives Revved With Ferrari-Inspired Design

Rarely does data storage look this sleek and sexy.

Designed by Pininfarina, the Italian company that also designs Ferraris, the new SimpleTech SimpleDrive External Hard Drives (www.simpletech.com) come in an array of colors and capacities: the 160GB (\$99) fire red version, the 250GB pearl white (\$119), the 320GB sapphire (\$159), and the 500GB onyx (\$199). Simple Tech is also releasing the 750GB (\$TBA) and 1TB (\$TBA) charcoal gray models. All versions feature USB 2.0 connectivity, and the two highest-capacity drives also have a FireWire 400 interface.

The drives feature a One-Click Backup button that lets you back up the entire content of your PC. And with each purchase of a SimpleDrive, you receive a 2GB storage account at the Fabrik Web site (www.myfabrik.com), the company that owns SimpleTech.



Apple iPods Dominate Teen MP3 Player Market

According to PiperJaffray's 13th biannual survey of teens, Apple iPods dominate the MP3 player market among this demographic. Of the teens polled, 78% say they own an MP3 player, and among those, 82% own an Apple iPod.

In addition, 42% of the teens said they were interested in buying an MP3 player in the next 12 months (both first-time buyers and those buying a replacement or additional model), and 73% of those said they would buy an iPod.



MP3 Player Ownership Among Teens

Brand	Percent Who Own
1. Apple iPod (any version)	82%
2. Sony	4%
3. Creative	3%
4. SanDisk	2%
5. Other	9%

Top 5 Cell Phone Vendors Remain Strong

Cell phone vendors shipped 256.4 million phones during the first quarter of 2007, a 10% increase from a year ago, according to research firm IDC. However, shipments were 13.8% lower than the record number of phones shipped in the previous quarter, which included the holiday season.

IDC reports that the Top 5 cell phone vendors did not change from the previous rankings.

Vendor	Q1 2007 Market Share	Q1 2006 Market Share
1. Nokia	35.5%	32.2%
2. Motorola	17.7%	19.8%
3. Samsung	13.6%	12.4%
4. Sony Ericsson	8.5%	5.7%
5. LG	6.2%	6.7%

Top Software Categories

According to a survey of nearly 3,600 adults in the United States, these are the top three categories of software based on 2006 purchases.

1. System utilities
2. Games
3. Finance

tidbits

BD (Blu-ray Disc) sales



made up 70% of all high-definition **movies sold** during the first quarter of this year.

Source: Home Media Research

25% of teens surveyed said they would buy an



Apple iPhone for its introductory price of \$500.

Source: PiperJaffray



59% of adults

polled said they bought at least one computer program last year.

Source: The NPD Group

586 million digital **music singles**

were downloaded from the Internet in 2006, a 60% increase from 2005.



Source: RIAA



Broadband

Internet service will pass 50% of all Internet-connected households in the United States this year.

Source: iSuppli

The typical American household **spends \$1,200**

each year on consumer electronics products.



Source: CEA

Clean Power

Why You Need It



You have probably researched the connections you'll need so that your home theater system looks and sounds its best, but have you considered the power supply? Home theater equipment makes some serious power demands, and if you don't supply that power properly, you may permanently damage your equipment. Doing so requires a power conditioner, such as the Tripp-Lite Audio/Video Digital UPS (#HT1000UPS, \$189.95; www.triplite.com), which guards against fluctuations in power, filters out stray signals that interfere with the picture and sound quality of your home theater, and provides roughly three hours of battery backup. Devices that offer this combo provide clean power, which is

important if you want to get the most out of your AV equipment.

The Ups & Downs Of Electricity

Often, when we think of power problems, we think of a **surge**, where too much power fries fragile system components, or a **blackout**, where power to devices is completely cut off. There are other power problems, though, such as brownouts, overvoltages, and dirty electrical signals, that we should shield components from, too. **Brownouts** happen when there is electricity coming through the wires but in insufficient amounts to handle the current power demands. **Overvoltages** are just the opposite: There is a power surge that causes too much electricity to reach a device, although it's

not enough to fry the circuitry all at once. Both of these conditions have short-term consequences, such as interfering with a television's image quality or a sound system's sound quality, but if they are allowed to persist, they can permanently damage equipment.

Dirty electrical signals are created when EMI (electromagnetic interference) and RF (radio frequency) waves from other devices clash with electrical waves. This can cause slight static in your sound equipment or degradations in a television image. Power filtering bars EMI waves from piggybacking on the electrical waves that enter your components, restoring maximum sound and picture quality.

Perfecting The Wave

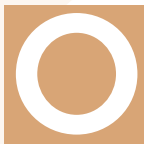
Power conditioners (also called line conditioners) use internal transformers to smooth the spikes and dips in an electrical signal and incorporate line filters that remove EMI and RF noise from the electricity that goes to your AV equipment. The end result is that components plugged into the line conditioner receive a clean electrical signal that is at the exact power the components need to operate at their highest quality level.

The best power conditioners, such as the Tripp-Lite mentioned earlier, incorporate batteries that can keep your AV equipment powered temporarily during a blackout. This is important because it lets you turn off each component manually, which is much less harsh on equipment than having power immediately cut off. Turning things off is also important because, when power is restored, everything that was turned on and lost power will likely turn on at the same time, which can overload your incoming power line and potentially damage equipment. If you want your equipment to last a long time and look and sound its best, don't forget the power conditioner. **FG**

BY TRACY BAKER

Contrast Ratio

In The Eye Of The Beholder?



K, what's going on here? You see two HDTVs sitting side by side in your local Best Buy store.

One has a contrast ratio of 5,000:1, and the other has a 1,500:1 rating. Yet their pictures look almost exactly the same to you. Does contrast ratio mean anything at all?

Contrast ratio, put simply, is the difference between the brightest image and the darkest image a TV can display. For example, if an HDTV with a 1,500:1 contrast ratio is showing a pure white ball on a pure black background, the white ball theoretically would be 1,500 times brighter than the black backdrop. An HDTV with a 3,000:1 contrast ratio might show a whiter ball, a blacker background, or both.

However, this simple explanation does not tell the whole story. For one thing,

different manufacturers measure and advertise contrast ratio in different ways. Instead of testing an HDTV under typical lighting, they'll more likely test the TV in a pitch-black room. Contrast ratios are higher in a room that reflects no light back at the screen, and thus testing in the dark yields more impressive ratings.

Manufacturers also may measure a fully white screen and then a completely black screen (called **full-on/off contrast**), which will make the contrast ratio seem

higher than it would with both white and black objects on-screen simultaneously (called **ANSI contrast**). Full-on/off contrast is also called **dynamic**, as it takes into account the brightest white and darkest black an HDTV can produce over a period of time as the set adapts to lighter and darker parts of the video. ANSI contrast is sometimes called **static** because it describes the contrast ratio a TV can produce in a single frame of video.

Because they use different types of light sources, LCD HDTVs generally have lower contrast ratios than plasma displays and traditional CRT TVs. Under real-world conditions, however, high-quality LCDs can appear to have nearly as much contrast as HDTVs with higher contrast ratios, especially if there's any light in the room. Some LCDs even throw light on the wall behind the set, which tricks your eyes into seeing deeper dark areas on the screen.

In short, trust your own eyes more than you trust contrast ratio numbers. If an HDTV's lights and darks look good enough to you, that's what matters. **FG**

BY MARTY SEMS

Contrasting Points

Unless you're watching TV in a very dark room, a high contrast-ratio HDTV may look nearly the same as a lower contrast-ratio set.

Because manufacturers differ on how they report contrast ratio, it's more practical to use it to compare HDTVs of the same brand than

models that are made by different vendors.

To compare HDTVs from different manufacturers, you really have to judge them in person. ●

Optimal HDTV Placement

Viewing Height Matters, Too



You've spent a good deal of money on an exciting new HDTV. But did you know that you can make the picture look its best just by placing the TV in the right spot?

In *First Glimpse*, we've often talked about how far you should sit from an HDTV based on its screen size (see our "Rules Of Thumb" sidebar in this article for the magic formula). At the proper viewing distance, you'll see extraordinary detail without being distracted by the pixels of the screen. We've also discussed how you should turn the set or use window blinds to avoid distracting glare on the screen.

Something we haven't talked about quite as much is how high off the floor your HDTV should be. Whether your TV is sitting in an entertainment center or hanging on the wall, there's a viewing height that will make the TV's image quality the best it can be.

Ideally, you want the middle of the screen to be at about eye level when you sit down to watch TV. This is especially true for LCD and rear-projection HDTVs, as their pictures may seem darker if you're looking at their screens from above or below.

Say you're sitting down, watching the end of a western, and the hero is riding off into the sunset. The horizon stretches from left to right across the middle of the screen. If your eyes are at about the same level as the horizon in the movie—you can check this with a tape measure if you like—your HDTV is probably at its ideal viewing height.

Some of us tend to think that a wall-mounted, flat-panel TV should hang at

the same level as photos, paintings, or other wall decorations. A pretty HDTV hanging about two-thirds of the way from the floor to the ceiling may be aesthetically pleasing, but it's not a good idea in most situations. If you hang an HDTV too high, you'll have to tilt your head back in order to watch it, and that may become uncomfortable.

If you do prefer to have your HDTV mounted higher on the wall than we recommend, select a wall mount that lets you tilt the set forward a bit. If the screen is perpendicular to the line of your vision, meaning that it's facing you at a right angle, it should look just fine from your vantage point. **FG**

BY MARTY SEMS

Rules Of Thumb

You can distill the essence of this article into two simple TV-mounting guidelines. Feel free to change them to suit you, however.

Viewing distance: Sit back double the diagonal screen size.

Viewing height: Set the middle of the screen at eye level.

Calibrate Your HDTV

Don't Skip This Important Step

According to Bayard Buetow, service manager for the Magnolia Home Theater (www.bestbuy.com), TV manufacturers often boost the televisions' brightness and contrast on showroom floors so the sets stand out among their competitors. Manufacturers aren't trying to deceive you, but you'll probably have to calibrate your HDTV so it looks good in your living room, too.

Calibrating your HDTV can help you achieve the stunning picture that first inspired you to go high-def. There are typically two methods of calibrating your HDTV: hiring a professional or making adjustments to the HDTV's OSD (on-screen display) menu yourself.

Do It Yourself

Before calibrating your HDTV, access the TV's OSD (typically, press Menu on the HDTV's remote) and set the contrast/picture, tint/hue, sharpness/detail/peaking, saturation/color/chroma, and brightness to the default settings (which are typically zero). Next, make sure the lighting in the room is set to the levels at which you generally watch TV.

THX Optimizer. The THX Optimizer is a basic calibration tool you'll find on THX-certified DVD movies produced after 2000. Use the search engine at THX (www.thx.com/home/dvd/search.html) to see if your DVD has this tool. If it does, access the THX Optimizer and follow the instructions to adjust your HDTV. The THX Optimizer displays test patterns so you can adjust the contrast, brightness,

Price Factor

Here are a few ways to calibrate your HDTV and the cost involved.

THX Optimizer: Free (with THX-Certified DVDs)

Avia: Guide to Home Theater: \$49.99

Magnolia Home Theater Optimization: \$300

color, tint/hue, sharpness, and aspect ratio (widescreen or fullscreen).

Avia. Ovation Multimedia's Avia: Guide To Home Theater (\$49.99; www.ovationmultimedia.com) is a comprehensive on-screen guide to calibrating your home theater and includes audio and video test patterns.



Hire A Pro

You can use the OSD to manually adjust the image settings, but calibration is more involved than making the artificial turf on Sunday's game look as green as you think it should. Although you may improve the HDTV's display yourself, calibration professionals, such as those at Magnolia Home Theater, can access

password-protected service modes to fine-tune the TV to ISF standards. Even if you were able to access your HDTV's service mode, Buetow says that these menus and options feature cryptic names and number in the hundreds. He warns, "a TV can be rendered unwatchable or inoperable if the adjustments are incorrectly set." Further, adjusting these settings may void your TV's warranty.

Most professional calibration experts use specialized equipment. For instance, the Magnolia Home Theater Optimization pros use the Sencore CP5000 color analyzer, which retails for about \$5,000. If you'd like to hire an ISF-certified pro from Magnolia, expect to pay about \$300 for the service.

Considering how much you've invested in your HDTV, a 2-hour, \$300 service call is not a bad deal. The rep will calibrate your TV for the best picture possible, create settings for two inputs (such as a game console and a DVD player), adjust the surround sound, and optimize the speakers' sound. Although the rep will show you how to operate the entire system, the calibration service does not include repair to speakers or wires or programming universal remotes.

Bottom Line

To get the most from your investment, you should calibrate your new HDTV. Spending the money to hire a professional HDTV calibrator can get your HDTV looking its absolute best. **PG**

BY ANDREW LEIBMAN

Luxury Home Theater

High-Performance Components For A High-Impact Experience



Universal Remote Control's MX-3000
\$999.99 • www.universalremote.com

Many of us who assemble our first home theater setup stick with components from a group of tried-and-true manufacturers. Their brand names are familiar, they fill the weekend newspaper ad

supplements, and they usually deliver good bang for the buck.

There is, however, another side to home theater. Or maybe another end is more like it: the higher end, with premium

components. You'll find well-known names here, too, but in some instances the brands might be unfamiliar. Many high-end components come from small, specialized manufacturers that lack the marketing budgets of large corporations. You can take your pick of familiar and less-well-known brands in Best Buy's Magnolia Home Theater store-within-a-store (www.bestbuy.com/magnolia).

So what kind of performance improvement over entry-level components can you expect out of a high-end item? "It's significantly more dynamic," says Justin Morrison, a Magnolia Home Theater supervisor. "Lower-end video and audio tends to be kind of closed-in—muted, almost. What you're doing with high-end gear is taking the blinders off, and getting a much bigger experience out of the picture and the sound."

And if the high end's higher prices cause you to blink, how might you justify the extra cost? "A good audio system is a long-term investment. The audio world doesn't change nearly as frequently as the video world, so a \$5,000 speaker package that you buy today will be just as valid 10 years from now," Morrison says. "Video is constantly changing, but even a lower-end product is still a good amount of money. So why spend that much money and not be satisfied overall, not be wowed by it every time you watch it, when you can add 10 to 15% to that and really be impressed every time you turn it on, for a relatively small price difference."

If price were no obstacle, what would star in your home theater? Let's take a

look at some of the components and brands you might never have looked at if you were bargain hunting.

HDTVs

At first glance, the picture of an entry-level HDTV and a higher-end model might look comparable, especially if you're moving up from a standard-definition TV. Watch long enough and you'll probably start to spot differences. Higher-end HDTVs, such as Samsung's 57-inch LN-S5797D LCD TV (\$7,999.99; www.samsung.com), tend to have more advanced, and more varied, processing circuitry than entry-level sets; higher-end sets deliver smooth motion, crisp edges, and clear imagery. Entry-level LCD, plasma, and rear-projection sets still look great most of the time, but you may notice occasional digital artifacts such as motion blur.

A sometimes-overlooked option for people who have room for a huge screen is front projection TV. You can achieve an immersive theatrical experience by pairing Sony's SXR-D VPL-VW50 Home Theater Front Projector HDTV (\$4,999.99; www.sonymstyle.com) with Stewart Filmscreen's Luxus Deluxe 100-inch ScreenWall (\$2,235; www.stewartfilmscreen.com).

Disc Players

If you're after the best quality that digital discs have to offer, then you'll want more than a high-definition television; you'll need high-def discs and players, too. BDs (Blu-ray Disc) and HD DVDs provide more detailed video than standard DVDs, but they require their own players, such as Panasonic's DMP-BD10 Blu-ray Disc Player (\$1,299.99; www.panasonic.com). In addition to playing BDs, this player also does an excellent job of upscaling standard DVDs to video resolutions as high as 1080p; it's not true high-definition, of course, but it's an improvement.

If you haven't yet made the move to high-def discs, a high-end DVD player such as Denon's DVD-1930CI (\$369; usa.denon.com) makes a great replacement for a budget player, scaling video up to 1080i and doubling as a SACD (super audio CD) player.

Receivers

Your receiver is the heart of your home theater system. It accepts the output signals from your players, cable set-top box, game console, etc., and routes the audio to your speakers and the video to your TV.

Pioneer is a familiar brand to most shoppers, but many people don't realize that it also features a high-end Elite line. And that's the logo you'll find on its VSX-82TXS 7.1 Channel A/V Receiver (\$1,200; www.pioneerelectronics.com). This unit boasts THX certification (a rigorous set of performance standards), and a trio of HDMI inputs for connecting three HD sources, such as a high-def cable box, BD player, and Xbox 360 Elite.

Speakers

Speakers is one area in which boutique brands thrive. Manufacturers such as MartinLogan (www.martinlogan.com), Mirage (www.miragespeakers.com), and Vienna Acoustics (www.viennaacoustics.com) may not be household names to some of us, but audiophiles know them well.

Look here for gorgeous designs, as well as innovation, even in something as traditional as floor-standing speakers. For example, Definitive Technology's BiPolar SuperTower line (\$599 each, and up; www.definitivetech.com) not only has two sets of full-range speakers that project sound out of the front and rear; they also have built-in subwoofers and would make tremendous front speakers in a home theater.

If you prefer unobtrusive speakers that don't compete with the furniture, check out SpeakerCraft's (www.speakercraft.com) line of in-wall and in-ceiling speakers. Its AIM8 series of 8-inch ceiling speakers (\$224 each, and up) feature pivots in the design, so you can direct the sound even after they're mounted in place. For your walls, try the MT6 Series (\$325 per pair, and up), which work well for front and surround speaker positions.

Accessories

Of course you'll want to squeeze out every bit of quality that your components are capable of, so don't forget the electrical supply. A surge protector, such as Panamax's M8HC-PRO 8-Outlet Surge Protector (\$149.95; www.panamax.com) will shield your system from damaging electrical spikes. A big step up is Panamax's MAX5400-EX 11-Outlet Power Conditioner (\$749.95). In addition to providing surge protection, it also filters out line noise and levels off power fluctuations so your system operates as cleanly as possible. (See "Clean Power" on page 16 for more information on power conditioners.)

If you have a flat-panel HDTV suitable for hanging, find a sturdy wall mount that'll hold the TV in place. Sanus Systems' VisionMount VMDD26 (\$619.99; www.sanus.com) supports televisions between 42 and 63 inches, and its hinged arms let you swivel and tilt the TV as needed.

Finally, to top everything off, how about one remote to rule them all? Universal Remote Control's MX-3000 (\$999.99; www.universalremote.com) uses a color touchscreen interface to control up to 255 components.

Nothing less will do when you're seated in the lap of luxury. **FG**

BY BRIAN HODGE

HDTV Shopping Tips

A Rear-Projection HDTV

BY MARTY SEMS

If you want a big-screen HDTV, but you don't really care whether it's as thin as an LCD or plasma, you might be able to get a larger display for your money. Consider shopping for an RPTV (rear-projection TV). Some models have such good picture quality that rear-projection fans say there's little reason to spend more on a flat-panel TV.

Typical RPTVs project an image onto a rear-mounted mirror that reflects the picture onto the screen. Because of this, RPTVs are usually two to four times as deep as LCDs or plasmas. A bright lamp or LEDs provide the light. Many rear-projection sets are no taller than an LCD or plasma. Other RPTVs are freestanding, meaning they're tall enough that they don't need a TV stand. Before you shop, though, measure the space you have for a new TV set so you don't accidentally buy something that's too big. "Too big" meaning it dominates the room, upsetting your feng shui and cosmic balance, or it simply doesn't fit in the entertainment center.

RPTVs have been around for a while, but manufacturers have developed several advanced picture technologies you should be aware of. A DLP (Digital Light Processing) set uses a chip with hundreds of thousands to millions of tiny mirrors that turn each pixel on or off, plus a spinning color filter wheel (except in LED-lighted DLPs), to create vibrant, smooth-moving scenes. LCD RPTVs project light through a trio of liquid crystal chips to display an image similar to that of a flat-panel LCD HDTV. Meanwhile, the promising new LCoS (liquid crystal on silicon)

technology, called SXRD (Silicon Xtal [meaning crystal] Reflective Display) by Sony and D-ILA (Digital Direct Drive Image Light Amplifier) by JVC, combines aspects of DLP and LCD. LCoS projects light through one or three chips with single mirrors on them, while advanced liquid crystal layers control the light that passes through to the screen.

CRT sets often are the least expensive RPTVs. However, some CRT RPTVs have a fuzzier picture than DLP, LCoS, or LCD models, which is a shortcoming of the technology. Three colors (R, G, B) have to converge in focus, so there's room for error. You might also have to adjust the sharpness of a CRT depending on the type of video you're watching; some RPTVs let you do this via the remote.

Try out as many rear-projection HDTVs as your local Best Buy carries. Watch both HD and standard resolution content, such as a DVD. Look for any irregularities in the picture, such as blocky pixels that are noticeable at a typical viewing distance or stray colors that appear between bright and dark objects on-screen. Walk around each RPTV to see how good its picture looks at various viewing angles.

SHOPPING CHECKLIST

☐ How big is the screen (in inches)?

- ☐ 46
- ☐ 50
- ☐ 56
- ☐ 60
- ☐ 65

☐ How deep is the set (in inches)?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 23 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 27 |

☐ What type of display technology does the rear-projection HDTV use?

- ☐ LCoS (D-ILA, SXRD)
- ☐ DLP
- ☐ LCD
- ☐ CRT

☐ Does the picture look good under the following conditions?

- ☐ With HD programming
- ☐ With DVD and standard resolution video
- ☐ From the side
- ☐ From below or above

☐ Notes

HDTVs

5 Must-Have Accessories



1 nvariably, as you head toward the HDTV section of your local consumer electronics store, you'll walk right past shelves of bland-looking HDTV accessories. Sure these accessories have multichannel audio, gold-plated connectors, nitrogen-injected insulation, and fully-articulating mounting arms, but they just can't compete visually with their big-screen, flat-panel HDTV counterparts. Despite outward appearances, however, there are a handful of accessories that are absolutely vital to getting the most from your HDTV.

1 HDMI cables. Who wants a living room full of cables and cords? Certainly not mom; and besides, those wires can be a nuisance (and a danger) to pets and little ones. HDMI cables are all-in-one cords that carry uncompressed digital audio and digital video signals to and from your HDTV and its components, eliminating the need for separate cords for video and audio. Acoustic Research's AP085 6-foot HDMI cable (\$99.99; www.araccessories.com) is the perfect accessory to pass your digital signals—nicely and neatly, of course—among your devices. Be sure to budget for this must-have.

2 Wall mount. There's nothing better than showing off your home videos and photos when friends and family are over. An elegant way of doing so is by displaying them on your HDTV that's mounted on a wall, turning your videos and photos into veritable works of art framed by your TV's sleek bezel. A wall-mounted HDTV also gives you more floor space and keeps your living room neat and clutter-free. Once the mount and TV are installed (you can always take advantages of Best Buy's Magnolia Premium Home Theater Installation service), many will let you tilt and rotate the HDTV in either direction to ensure a perfectly level picture.

3 Stand. If you'd rather not drill holes in your home's newly painted walls, or if you live in a condo and your walls are cement or cinderblock, a stand is a better option than a wall mount. Today's A/V furniture manufacturers offer a variety of gorgeous, showroom-style stands in a variety of materials, including warm wood (available in all sorts of stains), minimalist brushed steel, and clean-looking glass. You can get a triangular corner model, a model that includes a mount for flat-panel HDTVs, and stands that include shelves to handle the rest of your A/V gear.

4 Surround-sound system. We're willing to bet that you've struggled with keeping volume levels steady when you're watching something on TV. There's nothing more annoying than being startled by a loud commercial in the middle of your favorite show; likewise, nothing is more jolting than when a quiet, serene part of your favorite movie is suddenly interrupted by a too-loud scene change. Eliminate this by investing in a good-quality surround-sound system, which will prevent volume extremes by automatically equalizing the audio in movies and HD broadcasts that are capable of 5.1 or better surround sound.

5 Universal remote. Let's face it: Everyone—mom, dad, grandma, even the kids—often get remotes mixed up when there's one for each component in your home-theater system. Get rid of that mountain of plastic with a programmable universal remote, which lets you control everything with a single device. The Logitech Harmony 880 Advanced Universal Remote (\$249.99; www.logitech.com) lets you control up to 15 devices in your home-theater system at once. Better still, you'll keep your living room clean and clutter-free. **FC**

BY ANDREW LEIBMAN

Buying An HDTV

Top 5 Things To Know

Buying an HDTV is a big decision. There are myriad options and no shortage of accessory choices. And let's face it—you're spending a whole lot of money. We'll help you cut through the clutter and identify the five most important things to consider when shopping for the right set for you and your family.

1 Buy better cables. Very few home-theater components, including the most expensive televisions and DVD players, come with quality cables. Plan to spend an extra hundred dollars or so purchasing cables for the highest-resolution formats each device supports. HDMI, DVI, and

component are all HD-compatible options. HDMI, the newest HD interface standard, eliminates cord clutter with a single, slim cord that connects your DVD player or digital television receiver to your television. It also supports all high-definition resolutions (720p, 1080i, etc.) while maintaining a digital signal throughout the process. Whatever option you choose, don't buy the cheapest or shortest cable on the shelf. Low-quality construction invites electrical interference and unreliable connections, and the cables may not withstand normal wear and tear as well as more expensive ones.

2 Don't hang it yourself. In most cases, it's best to hire a professional to hang your HDTV. A successful wall mount on regular drywall requires the right bracket, a correct alignment to wall studs, and a reliable attachment between the TV and its bracket. Brick or cinderblock walls provide an even greater challenge. Most electronics retailers offer affordable installation services and usually guarantee their work. Unless you're willing to bet your big new investment on your carpentry skills, bring in the experts.

3 Make yourself at home. Unless your family room is of warehouse proportions with walls of shimmering TV sets, you may not get the most realistic impressions of HDTVs at the store, unless, that is, you take advantage of Best Buy and other retailers' efforts to recreate realistic home environments in some stores. Try to preview your prospective HDTV in realistic surroundings and bring some of your favorite movies to see how they look on your set before you buy.

4 Size it up. Finding a set that works in your room is a crucial part of your purchase. A small room and a couch near the TV means you should invest in a fairly small HDTV; a larger space with plenty of seating for friends and family requires a bigger screen. Use the three-to-five rule to calculate your optimal screen size. Measure the distance, in feet, from your TV's location to your viewing position. Multiply that number by three, and then by five. Those numbers represent the minimum and maximum screen sizes, measured in inches diagonally, for that space. For example, a 10-foot span from your TV to sofa will accommodate screens between 30 and 50 inches.

5 Color and calibration. There's more to brilliant, sharp pictures than screen resolution; color reproduction and calibration make a big difference, too. When you're in a store considering an HDTV, be sure the colors are consistently true to life. Blacks shouldn't appear gray, bright areas shouldn't wash detail away, and high-paced action scenes shouldn't have jagged edges. Calibration is another important factor to keep in mind; this will ensure your HDTV's settings will be far better than the showroom settings many televisions ship with. Most retailers offer professional calibration (such as Best Buy's Magnolia Home Theater Optimization package) that uses special equipment otherwise unavailable to consumers; in most cases, such calibration is your best bet. However, there are calibration DVDs that can walk you through the process yourself. **FC**



BY GREGORY ANDERSON

HDTV Glossary

B alderdash! OK, HDTV jargon isn't *that* bad, but there are a few terms every shopper should know. Here's your cheat sheet.

aspect ratio—Put simply, it's the shape of the TV's screen. An HDTV has a wider picture than a traditional TV of the same vertical screen height. An HDTV has a 16:9 aspect ratio, meaning that if its screen were 16 inches wide, it would be 9 inches tall. A regular 4:3 TV screen would be only 12 inches wide at the same 9-inch height.

HDMI—High-Definition Multimedia Interface is a new type of cable connection. It can carry both high-resolution video and uncompressed, multichannel audio among HDTVs, home-theater systems, and other components. HDMI cables are pricy, but they maintain top picture and sound quality.

HD tuner—Some more expensive HDTVs have a built-in tuner for receiving local high-definition broadcast TV channels. Your TV doesn't need an HD tuner if you have cable or satellite service. Separate HD tuners and antennas are available for HDTVs without them.

interlaced—When an HDTV displays an interlaced image, as in 1080i or 720i resolutions, it really shows you every other horizontal line of a frame of video (called a field) at a time. Sixty times a second, the TV displays the other field of the frame, meaning the lines not shown in the previous field. Interlaced video can seem to flicker and cause moving objects on-screen to have blurred edges.

LCD—Like a notebook's screen, a liquid-crystal display HDTV uses a fluid crystal



substance to form pixels of color in front of a backlight. LCDs may not be able to match plasma TVs' deep black and gray areas, but they're lighter, sometimes less fragile, and considered easier to set up. LCDs also are catching up to plasmas in size and price and are expected to supplant them in the market.

plasma—Plasma TVs use a tiny tube of gas for each pixel. Electricity makes each pixel glow. Plasmas are still available in bigger sizes than LCDs and create deeper blacks and sometimes brighter colors. However, older or less expensive models can also suffer permanent screen damage if an unchanging image is displayed too long, such as a TV channel's stock ticker or parts of certain video games.

progressive scan—A TV showing a progressively scanned image, as in 1080p or 720p resolutions, displays a full frame of video (both odd-lined and even-lined fields) all at once. Progressive-scan video

looks sharper and doesn't flicker like interlaced images can.

projection—Some large-screen HDTVs offer low-priced alternatives to LCD or plasma by using projection technologies. These technologies vary, but all projection TVs throw light on a screen from the front or rear. This means they're a little to a lot bulkier than plasmas or LCDs, but some rear-projection sets have stellar picture quality.

viewing angle—No matter where you sit in front of an HDTV with a wide viewing angle, such as 170 degrees, its picture should look reasonably good. Test this before you buy.

widescreen—A TV or monitor that's wider horizontally in relation to its vertical height—typically with a 16:9 aspect ratio for HDTVs—than an older 4:3 display.

BY MARTY SEMS

Plasma & LCD TVs

What's The Difference?

Flat-panel televisions continue to top electronics shoppers' wish lists. However, plasma and LCD sets are based on two very different technologies, so knowing their advantages and disadvantages will help you make an informed decision about which to bring home.

BY BRIAN HODGE

Plasma

Pros

- Because plasma TVs are based on phosphorescent screen technology, their pictures most resemble those of tube TVs in terms of brightness, color depth and shading, and picture clarity.
- Plasma still has the edge over LCDs on contrast ratio (often as high as 10,000:1), black levels, and reproducing subtle color shadings, particularly in dim scenes.
- Pixel response is very rapid, so fast-moving imagery shouldn't blur.
- Plasma sets are generally more affordable in larger screen sizes—say, over 50 inches.
- Although this is a more subjective evaluation, many viewers find that plasma sets do a better job of scaling up lower-resolution standard-definition TV signals.

Cons

- Some plasmas consume more electricity and put out much more heat during use than LCDs.
- At higher altitudes (above 6,500 feet), lower air pressure can cause the set to produce a buzzing noise similar to a neon sign.
- Although it's less likely now than with older sets, plasmas (usually cheaper, low-quality models) can still be susceptible to burn-in from static images such as stock-ticker bars and video-game gauges.
- With sets of equivalent size, plasmas are much heavier than LCDs, which can affect plans for wall mounting, and they can also be harder for one person to move.

Plasma Is Best For:

- Movie buffs
- Sports fanatics
- Viewers shopping for a large set
- Viewers prepared to pay for professional installation

LCD

Pros

- LCDs run cooler and often require less power to operate than plasma TVs.
- LCDs use a screen coating that reflects little ambient light, so glare and washout aren't a problem even under bright lighting conditions.
- There's no chance of image burn-in.
- Many LCD TVs have PC-compatible connections so the set can double as a computer monitor.
- With a few exceptions, LCD is your main choice for sets 40 inches and under. Most new under-40-inch plasmas come from off-brands that may be more of a gamble than sets from the major names.

Cons

- Pixel response may be a tad slower than plasma, so fast-moving imagery might blur.
- New LCDs may have stuck pixels, which show up as bright pinpoints of light. And a hard rap on the screen may break crystals and leave a permanent dark spot.
- True blacks can be difficult to reproduce because the fluorescent backlight still shines through the pixel grid (although some of the newest models are starting to address this by turning off the backlight in select screen areas).
- After a few years of use, the aging backlight may shift color somewhat, forcing the user to recalibrate the set.

LCD Is Best For:

- Avid gamers
- Viewers with brightly lit rooms
- Viewers shopping for a smaller set
- Viewers who want to do their own no-fuss installation
- Computer users

Which Type Of HDTV Is Right For You?

Plasma, LCD, and projection: These are the three main types of HDTVs from which you'll choose if you're in the market for a sleek, new set. Refer to our comparison chart below to see how the technologies stack up against each other.

What It Is	What It Means	Plasma	LCD	Microdisplay Rear Projection
Technology	Different types of HDTVs use different technologies; understanding each type can help make your decision easier	Plasma uses a network of cells, each filled with a gas mixture. When the gas is excited, it lights up, and the cells form the image on your HDTV.	Light is streamed through cells filled with a liquid crystal mixture. When charged, the intensity changes, forming the image on your HDTV.	There are three main types of rear-projection microdisplay: DLP, LCD, and LCoS. All use a lamp to bounce light off a chip onto the screen.
Size	The screen's diagonal size	Up to around 63 inches	Up to around 52 inches	Up to 65 inches and beyond
Depth	The depth of the set as a whole	4 to 5 inches deep	4 to 5 inches deep	From around 16 to 22 inches deep
Wall mountable	Can be mounted with a special bracket	Yes	Yes	No
Color reproduction	The brightness, saturation, and black level of an HDTV are some of the most important considerations	Excellent brightness, color saturation, and black levels	Exceptional brightness; very good color saturation; black-level quality is improving	Exceptional brightness and color saturation; generally excellent black levels
Ideal room type	Some types of HDTVs fit better in certain rooms than others	Media rooms with various seating areas	Rooms with windows or other ambient light	Larger rooms with a little extra floor space
Cost	HDTV prices range quite a bit depending on the technology	Expensive, though much less so than two years ago	Expensive, but generally less than plasma	Relatively inexpensive
Perfect for		TV fanatic who values picture quality above everything else	Gamers who also love HDTV	Big-screen lovers on a budget
Coollest feature		Excellent response time for high action	In general, can also be used as a PC monitor	Exceptional value for size



Plasma



LCD



Microdisplay Rear Projection



Which LCD TV Is Right For You?

So you've decided to get an LCD TV. The next step is deciding *which* LCD TV to invest in. If you're like most people, you're probably looking at a set that's in the 37- to 46-inch range. If you do purchase one of these HDTVs, know that you should be able to sit 5 to 10.5 feet away from it to get the best picture. Refer to this chart for further help when shopping.

What It Is	What It Means	HP MediaSmart SLC3760N	Samsung LN-T4066F	Samsung LN-T4661F
Size	The diagonal measurement of the TV's screen	37 inches	40 inches	46 inches
Dimensions (without stand)	Height x width x depth	26.5x37.5x6.75 inches	26x39x4 inches	27.75x43.5x4 inches
Weight (without stand)	How much the TV weighs	58.9 pounds	39.5 pounds	64.4 pounds
Native resolution	The image's sharpness is best when displayed at the native resolution; anything else must be converted	720p	1080p	1080p
Viewing angle	The maximum angle at which the viewer can see the screen clearly	176 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees
Inputs	Inputs let you connect your components to your TV	1 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 3 composite	3 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 2 RF	3 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 2 composite; 1 PC
Outputs	Outputs let information from the TV, usually audio, be transferred to peripherals, such as speakers	2 audio	1 headphone	N/A
Coollest feature		Built-in wireless networking capabilities let you transfer video, audio, and photos	Built-in audio system with dome speakers and virtual surround sound	Fast response time minimizes blurring of moving video
MSRP		\$1,499.99	\$2,499.99	\$3,499.99



HP SLC3760N
7865321



Samsung LN-T4066F
8251303



Samsung LN-T4661F
8251447



Sharp AQUOS LC-42D62U
7992684

	Sharp AQUOS LC-42D62U	Sharp AQUOS LC-46D82U	Sony BRAVIA KDL-40XBR2	Sony BRAVIA KDL-40V2500	Westinghouse W4207
	42 inches	46 inches	40 inches	40 inches	42 inches
	28x40.5x5 inches	29x44.75x5 inches	26x43.75x5 inches	26x39x4.25 inches	27x42x5 inches
	66.2 pounds	68.3 pounds	66.1 pounds	43 pounds	58.4 pounds
	1080p	1080p	1080p	1080p	720p
	176 degrees	176 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees	178 degrees
	2 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video;	3 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 2 composite	3 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 3 composite; 1 PC	2 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 3 composite; 1 PC	1 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 1 DVI; 1 PC
	3 audio	N/A	2 audio	2 audio	1 audio
	OPC Function automatically adjusts brightness to fit room conditions	Backlight System enhances and widens the TV's color spectrum	BRAVIA PRO light engine processes all video signals for better detail and color	True HD resolution , the highest consumers can buy right now	The price —excellent for a 42-inch LCD HDTV
	\$2,299.99	\$3,199.99	\$2,799.99	\$2,199.99	\$1,499.99



Sharp AQUOS LC-46D82U
8251287



Sony BRAVIA KDL-40XBR2
7941212



Sony BRAVIA KDL-40V2500
7986664



Westinghouse W4207
8114541

Which Plasma TV Is Right For You?

If you're planning on buying a plasma HDTV, it might be hard to decide on one just by looking at a wall of gorgeous sets. The most popular size of plasma TV is around 42 inches (and that's what we mainly focus on below); as with most things in life, though, the bigger the better, so you'll find larger plasmas, as well. Refer to this chart for further help when shopping.

What It Is	What It Means	Insignia NS-42PDP	LG 42PC5D	Panasonic TH-42PX75U
Size	The diagonal measurement of the TV's screen	42 inches	42 inches	42 inches
Dimensions (without stand)	Height x width x depth	26.5x49x3.5 inches	29x41x3.5 inches	27x40x4 inches
Weight (without stand)	How much the TV weighs	90.4 pounds	54.2 pounds	59.6 pounds
Native resolution	The image's sharpness is best when displayed at the native resolution; anything else must be converted	720p	720p	720p
Viewing angle	The maximum angle at which the viewer can see the screen clearly	N/A	N/A	170 degrees
Inputs	Inputs let you connect your components to your TV	1 HDMI; 3 component; 1 S-Video; 2 A/V; 1 PC	2 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 1 RF	2 HDMI; 1 component; 1 S-Video;
Outputs	Outputs let information from the TV, usually audio, be transferred to peripherals, such as speakers	1 audio; 1 A/V	1 audio; 1 video	2 audio; 1 video
Cooler feature		The price —excellent for a 42-inch plasma HDTV	XD Engine improves brightness, contrast, detail, and colors for cinema-like, high-resolution images	EZ-Sync technology lets you control all your HT components with one button
MSRP		\$1,199.99	\$1,599.99	\$1,599.95



Insignia NS-42PDP
7865465



LG 42PC5D
8254417



Panasonic TH-42PX75U
8254774



Pioneer Elite PRO-940HD
7952496

	Pioneer Elite PRO-940HD	Pioneer PDP-4271HD	Samsung HP-T4254	Samsung HP-T5054	Samsung TruWide HP-S6373
	42 inches	42 inches	42 inches	50 inches	63 inches
	26.75x41x4.5 inches	26.75x41x4.5 inches	27.5x41.5x3.75 inches	31x48.5x3.75 inches	39.5x60x3.5 inches
	69.4 pounds	63.9 pounds	67.5 pounds	91.7 pounds	154 pounds
	720p	720p	720p	720p	720p
	160 degrees	160 degrees	175 degrees	175 degrees	175 degrees
	2 HDMI; 3 component; 2 S-Video; 3 composite	2 HDMI; 3 component; 2 S-Video	3 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 2 RF	3 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 2 RF	2 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video
	1 audio	1 audio; 1 video	3 audio	2 audio	2 audio
	Crystal Emissive layer for deeper blacks and increased brightness	CableCARD slot and TV Guide On Screen	Game mode for improved dark areas, picture, image processing response and sound	Auto-pixel-shift technology that prevents picture burn-in	Size —the perfect centerpiece for your family's dream media room
	\$3,300	\$1,999.99	\$2,299.99	\$2,999.99	\$2,299.99



Pioneer PDP-4271HD
7854707



Samsung HP-T4254
8251633



Samsung HP-T5054
8254257



Samsung TruWide HP-S6373
7983989

Which Microdisplay TV Is Best For You?

If you're in the market for a big HDTV, a rear-projection microdisplay model can give you a lot of bang for your buck. Here is a chart that compares eight 55- to 60-inch models, all available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com).

What It Is	What It Means	Mitsubishi WD-65731	Mitsubishi WD-57731	Panasonic PT- 56DLX76
Projection technology	Depending on the manufacturer, the TV will have DLP, LCD, or LCoS microdisplay technology	DLP	DLP	DLP
Size	The diagonal measurement of the TV's screen	65 inches	57 inches	56 inches
Dimensions (without stand)	Height x width x depth	40.75x58.5x20 inches	36x51.5x18 inches	36.5x52x17.5 inches
Weight (without stand)	How much the TV weighs	103.7 pounds	96 pounds	75 pounds
Native resolution	The image's sharpness is best when displayed at the native resolution; anything else must be converted	1080p	1080p	1080p
Inputs	Inputs let you connect your components to your TV	2 HDMI; 2 component; 3 S-Video; 3 composite	2 HDMI; 2 component; 3 S-Video; 2 RF	2 HDMI; 2 component; 3 S-Video; 3 A/V
Outputs	Outputs let information from the TV, usually audio, be transferred to peripherals, such as speakers	1 audio	1 audio; 1 video	2 audio; 1 video
Cooliest feature		CableCARD slot allows access to cable and HDTV without the need for a set-top box	6-color light engine for expanded colors and brighter images	Artificial Intelligence feature, where the volume automatically evens out
MSRP		\$2,299.95	\$2,399.99	\$2,699.95



Mitsubishi WD-65731
7823206



Mitsubishi WD-57731
7820343



Panasonic PT-56DLX76
8185778



Samsung HL-T5687S
8293456

	Samsung HL-T5687S	Samsung HL-S6187W	Sony Grand WEGA KDF-55E2000	Sony WEGA SXRD KDS-60A2020	Toshiba 65HM167
	DLP	DLP	LCD	LCoS (Sony's name for it is SXRD)	DLP
	56 inches	61 inches	55 inches	60 inches	65 inches
	35x50.5x13.5 inches	35.5x55.5x17.5 inches	35.75x51.25x17.5 inches	38.75x55.5x20 inches	37x58x22 inches
	69 pounds	81.7 pounds	75 pounds	94.8 pounds	100 pounds
	1080p	1080p	720p	1080p	1080p
	3 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 2 RF; 1 USB; 1 PC	2 HDMI; 2 component; 2 S-Video; 1 RF	2 HDMI; 3 component; 1 S-Video; 5 A/V	2 HDMI; 3 component; 1 S-Video; 5 audio; 1 RF	3 HDMI; 2 component; 1 S-Video; 2 A/V; 1 RF
	2 audio; 1 video	1 audio	5 audio	1 audio	2 audio
	LED light engine for higher energy efficiency and beautiful colors	Cinema Smooth film mode eliminates artificial frames that are created when films are converted to DVDs	Cinema Black Pro for excellent black levels in this price category	SXRD technology for excellent resolution, contrast ratio, response time, and production	Pixel Plus technology enhances every pixel for razor-sharp images and excellent detail and depth
	\$2,799.99	\$2,599.99	\$1,899.99	\$2,899.99	\$2,199.99



Samsung HL-S6187W
7705897



Sony Grand WEGA KDF-55E2000
7834828



Sony WEGA SXRD KDS-60A2020
8242109



Toshiba 65HM167
8275706



Buying A Digital Camera

A Quick Guide To Smart Shopping

Some items make ideal impulse purchases: CDs. Magazines. Pay-per-view movies. Cameras definitely don't belong on that list. Making sure you end up with a camera that's right for you requires a little more effort. If a new camera is one of your must-have items, here are some things you might want to do before reaching for your MasterCard.

Picture-Taking Habits & Goals

Start with a clear idea of how your camera will fit into your life, as well as the kinds of photos you want to shoot.

First, there are lifestyle considerations. Do you want something that will travel lightly in your pocket, or do you aspire to collecting a camera bag full of accessories such as interchangeable lenses? Do you need something that will automatically adjust the camera settings for you, or do you lean toward total manual creative control? Do you tend to be rough on things and need something that will be durable and even waterproof?

Second, consider the end results you're after. Are you primarily interested in taking candid snapshots of friends? Do you have more of an eye for landscapes and other artistic photos and enjoy the process of carefully setting up each shot?

Asking yourself these and other questions will help you zero in on what you need. Even though Canon's EOS 30D (\$1,499.99 with 28-135mm lens; www.usa.canon.com) and PowerShot A550 (\$199.99), for instance, have close to the same megapixel count, there's a big difference between them and the photographers they would appeal to.

Set Your Budget

You can pay about as much or as little for a camera these days as you want, from less than a hundred to several thousand dollars. Decide what you can afford and then make it your mission to get the most for your money that you can, in image quality and camera features that you will find useful.

Ask For Testimony

You probably know at least one or two people who use a camera often. No doubt they'll be glad to tell you all about it and maybe give you a demonstration. This is a good way to get recommendations for cameras that might be right for you. A word of warning, though: If your source is using a camera that's more than a couple of years old, there's a good chance that the manufacturer has discontinued that model and replaced it with a newer one that may have different specifications and more features.

Research Choices

If you've compiled a shortlist of cameras that interest you, spend some time online finding out what other people have to say about them. Resources such as the user reviews at Epinions (www.epinions.com) are a good place to start. Recurring observations—for instance, frequent praise for a camera's ease of use or complaints that a model has unusually short battery life—may influence your decision.

Educate Yourself

Informed buyers make better decisions. Before heading for the retail camera counter, get conversant on basic terminology, camera usage, and so on.

Fortunately, that's what our next several articles are all about. We'll make sure you're up to speed on topics such as megapixels, battery life, accessories, the differences between point-and-shoot compacts and digital SLRs, and much more.

So, read on . . . and, when you're ready, take your best shot! **FG**

BY BRIAN HODGE

Camera Shopping Checklist

- ☐ Clarify how you'll be using your camera
- ☐ Determine your budget
- ☐ Ask acquaintances for recommendations
- ☐ Research all of your prospective choices
- ☐ Educate yourself on terminology, etc.

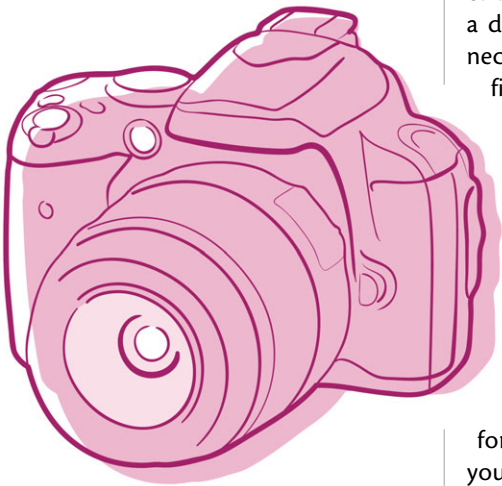


Canon PowerShot A550
\$199.99 • www.usa.canon.com

D-SLRs vs. Point-&-Shoot Digital Cameras

Which One Is Right For You?

Digital camera prices—including those for digital SLRs—have plummeted, making dollars a less important factor in a buying decision. D-SLRs and point-and-shoot cameras have their own sets of benefits and drawbacks, so you don't have to base your decision solely on price.



D-SLRs offer flexibility and control. Most importantly, the lenses are interchangeable, so you can select the best lens for the pictures you want to take, and because lenses are high quality, your pictures will be sharp and detailed. Advanced manual controls (exposure, color, sharpness, and contrast, for instance) let you fine-tune image properties—provided you have the time and patience to learn how to use all of the features.

You can find accessories such as external flash units, battery grips (which hold an extra battery or two and attach to the camera, providing double or triple battery life), infrared and wireless remotes, and more. And D-SLRs are fast—they start up quickly and shoot multiple images with little or no hesitation. To make the most of a digital SLR, an expanded budget is necessary to outfit the camera to best fit your shooting style.

Relatively large and heavy, you won't be able to slip a D-SLR in your pocket or purse, either.

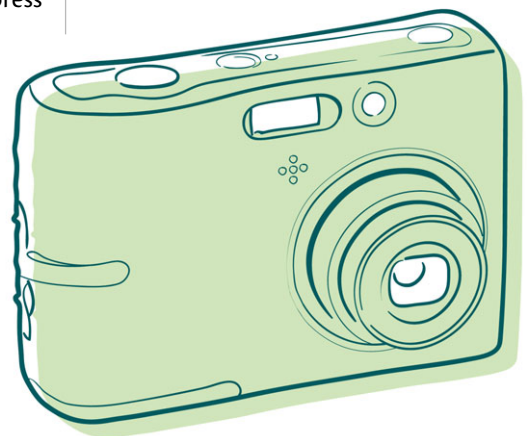
Point-and-shoot digital cameras are easier to carry around and look good too, with modern designs and sometimes fashionable colors. These cameras are designed for ease of use; as the name implies, you point it at your subject and press the shutter.

Although some advanced point-and-shoot cameras let you manually control shutter speed, they generally don't provide the same range of settings or the speedy shutter responses that D-SLRs do. Generally, point-and-shoot cameras have an automatic setting and some scene modes. For a little more control, you can opt for a scene mode (such as portrait,

beach, or action) that matches the picture you're taking, and the camera automatically implements the best settings for the shot. Point-and-shoot cameras usually offer some control over your picture-taking, such as letting you choose the ISO (light sensitivity) and adjust the exposure via a sliding scale (Exposure Compensation). Some have built-in help menus that explain the different features or settings.

Fewer features means less control over your pictures and point-and-shoot cameras are slower than D-SLRs, so it's more difficult to capture action shots. And point-and-shoots also suffer from shutter lag—the time between pressing the shutter and taking the picture, which can be frustrating. **PG**

BY THEANO NIKITAS



Features, Benefits & Drawbacks

To help decide which camera is best for you, weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each and match them up with your needs.

D-SLR Cameras

Benefits

1. Manual exposure control and advanced features to fine-tune color balance, color space, contrast, saturation, and more
2. Interchangeable lenses and a range of accessories, such as external flash units, battery grips, and wireless remotes
3. Fast overall performance; quick start up and continuous shooting
4. High-quality lenses, a plethora of manual controls, and sophisticated in-camera processing
5. Great control in low-light situations and little image noise (grain)
6. Excellent battery life

Drawbacks

1. Relatively big and heavy
2. Extra lenses and accessories make them cumbersome to take with you
2. Expensive
3. Steep learning curve
4. No video mode
5. Composition through viewfinder; few have live LCD

Point-&-Shoot Digital Cameras

Benefits

1. Simple feature set with intuitive settings and controls
2. Easy to use out of the box
3. Some have built-in help, which explains features or modes
4. Preset shooting modes help you adjust shots to conditions
5. With few exceptions, can shoot video, too
6. Affordable—sub-\$500, with most in the \$200 to \$300 range
7. Small, lightweight, and portable
8. Available in colors and cool designs

Drawbacks

1. Minimal manual controls and features mean less control over images
2. Slow response time, including shutter lag and delays between shots
3. Integrated lens, so few options to expand zoom range of lens
4. Limited accessories; most do not accept external flash and built-in flash has limited reach

Popular Cameras

Here we've listed some of today's popular D-SLR and point-and-shoot cameras.

Digital SLR Cameras

1. Canon Digital Rebel XTi (\$899.95 with 18-55mm lens; \$799.95 body only; www.usa.canon.com)
2. Nikon D40 (\$599.95 with 18-55mm lens; www.nikonusa.com)
3. Olympus E-500 (\$799.99 with 14-45mm and 40-150mm lenses; www.olympusamerica.com)
4. Pentax K100D (\$649.95 with 18-55mm lens; www.pentaximaging.com)

Point-&-Shoot Digital Cameras

1. Canon SD1000 (\$299.99; www.usa.canon.com)
2. Canon A570 IS (\$279.99)
3. Casio EX-Z1000 (\$349.99; www.casio.com)
4. Kodak EasyShare V803 (\$199.95; www.kodak.com)
5. Nikon Coolpix L12 (\$199.99; www.nikonusa.com)
6. Olympus SP-550UZ (\$499.99; www.olympusamerica.com)
7. Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX2S (\$499.99; www.panasonic.com)
8. Samsung NV10 (\$299.99; www.samsungcamera.com)
9. Sony DSC-H5 (\$499.99; www.sonystyle.com)

Everything You Need To Know About Battery Life

Don't Get Caught Short

There's nothing more frustrating when shooting with your digital camera than running out of power just as the perfect picture comes into view. Although camera and battery technology has improved considerably over the past decade, battery life—which is dependent on the type of battery and charger, the camera, and how often you use certain features—can still fall short.

AA Battery Options

Cameras that use AA batteries offer the most flexibility because you can use alkalines or NiMH (nickel metal hydride) rechargeable batteries. NiMH batteries, however, outlast alkalines and should be your battery of choice when shooting with a camera that accepts AA batteries.

For example, the Canon PowerShot A560 (\$229.99; www.usa.canon.com) delivers excellent battery life. With a set of NiMH batteries, you'll get about 500 shots as opposed to the 140 you'll get with a pair of AA alkalines. And, the NiMH rechargeable batteries are easy on the environment because you can use them over and over, whereas you have to pitch AA alkalines when they're depleted.

As you consider chargers, remember that a quick charger (one that charges the batteries in a couple of hours vs. overnight) is handy but decreases the number of times the batteries will accept a charge.

Another camera with good battery life is the Nikon Coolpix L12 (\$199.99; www.nikonusa.com), which uses AA batteries.

With a set of single-use/disposable Lithium AAs (like alkalines but they use different technology and last longer), the L12 can take an amazing 600 shots versus about 250 shots with AA alkaline batteries. Nikon also offers an optional proprietary rechargeable battery for the

L12, but it only lasts about 300 shots on one charge.

Proprietary Batteries

Other cameras use only proprietary rechargeable batteries, and battery life among these varies greatly. Many compact cameras are so small and slender that they can only take a tiny battery, and because they usually have LCDs (which quickly drain power), they can take only about 200 shots per charge. On the other hand, D-SLRs use larger batteries and, with few exceptions, the LCDs are only used to read the menus and play back images, so battery life is substantially longer. The Canon Digital Rebel XTi D-SLR (\$899.99 with 18-55mm lens) easily shoots 500 images on a single charge.

In addition to large LCDs and frequent use of the flash, other power drains include optical and mechanical image stabilization, especially when the camera's image stabilization is always on.

Many, but not all, digital camera manufacturers publish an approximate number of images you can take on a single charge according to the standards set by CIPA (Camera and Imaging Products Association). You can usually find this in the camera's specifications, available on the manufacturer's Web site. This will give you a good idea of how long the battery will last, but you may find that you're willing to give up battery life for other features or for a more compact body. **FG**

Battery Life Shopping Tips

Here's a quick list of what to consider when shopping for a digital camera:

What kind of battery/batteries does the camera use? If it uses AA batteries, then you have more choices regarding battery type, some of which, such as NiMH rechargeables, may deliver longer battery life than proprietary rechargeable batteries.

Does the camera have an optical viewfinder and an LCD or only an LCD? If the former, then you can turn off the LCD to save battery life.

Can you set how long before the camera powers down?

What, if any, CIPA (Camera and Imaging Products Association) rating does the camera have? (Manufacturers usually base shots-per-charge on a standard set by CIPA.)

BY THEANO NIKITAS

Budget Breakdown

The Price Of Good Pictures

Digital cameras come in many shapes, sizes, and colors and with myriad features. Today's digital cameras fit in two primary categories: compact digital cameras and D-SLRs. As their name suggests, compact digital cameras are small and portable. "A D-SLR camera . . . offers the best image quality of any camera regardless of megapixel," according to Paul Niebeling, senior manager of digital imaging at Best Buy.

Zoom power and fast response times are other enticing D-SLR features, according to Niebeling. When buying a camera, don't stop there: Get a complete package by adding some key accessories. We're here to help you shop with a price breakdown of the things you'll need. **FG**

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON

Accessory	Compact Digital Camera	D-SLR
Camera	Some compact digital cameras are available for under \$100, but be prepared to spend \$200 to \$400 if you want any features. We especially like the new Casio EX-V7 (\$399.99; www.casio.com), a 7.2MP camera with a 7X optical zoom. Budget: \$200 to \$400	D-SLRs generally cost more than compact cameras. Some of our favorite D-SLR kits (which includes a lens) are the Nikon D40 (\$599.99; www.nikon.com) and Canon Digital Rebel XTi (\$899.99; www.canon.com). Unlike compact digital cameras that have an integrated lens, you can buy additional interchangeable lenses for your D-SLR. Budget: \$600 or more
Memory Card	Buy extra memory cards to ensure you have plenty of storage capacity. For an economically priced card with lots of space, consider the Kingston 2GB Secure Digital Card (\$28; www.kingston.com). Budget: \$28	High-speed cards are especially important when you want the most performance out of your D-SLR. One such high-speed card is the SanDisk Extreme III CompactFlash 4GB (\$119.99; www.sandisk.com). Budget: \$120
Case	Look for a compact case, such as the Kenneth Cole Reaction Camera Case with Flap - Black (\$9.99; www.bestbuy.com), that can hold your camera, spare batteries, extra memory cards, and more. Budget: \$10	Get a large, protective case for your D-SLR and all its accessories. We love the messenger-style Lowepro SlingShot 200AW (about \$89.95; www.lowepro.com) with plenty of compartments. Budget: \$90
Spare Battery	If your compact digital camera takes standard AA batteries, grab an Energizer NiMH Compact AA/AAA Battery Charger with 4 Rechargeable AA Batteries (about \$28; www.energizer.com). Otherwise, if your camera has a proprietary battery, expect to spend about \$40 for a spare. Budget: \$28 to \$40	D-SLRs usually have proprietary rechargeable batteries, such as the Nikon EN-EL9 Rechargeable Li-Ion Battery (about \$42.97; www.nikon.com) for the D40, and it's a good idea to have a backup. Budget: \$43
Tripod	Tripods vary in weight, maximum height, and the size of camera they support. If your compact digital camera has a tripod socket, get a tripod that's both flexible and mobile, such as the Joby Gorillapod (\$21.95; www.joby.com). Budget: \$22	To take advantage of the slow shutter speeds available with your D-SLR, get a sturdy tripod. We like the Manfrotto-Bogen Tripod Kit with Pan/Tilt Head and Bag 804RC2, 3001BN (\$279.99; www.bogenimaging.us). Budget: \$280
Bottom Dollar	\$280 to \$500	\$1,150 or more



Digital Camera Presets

What They Mean & When To Use Them

Becoming a better digital photographer arguably relies on two things: experimentation and experience. Acquiring experience means experimenting with your camera's various tools, including its preset shooting modes. Presets—Twilight, Night Portrait, Sports, etc.—automatically set a digital camera to predetermined exposure settings that match a given lighting environment. Nearly every digicam today offers at least a few presets, although some models may have 20 or more. The following are common presets to experiment with to gain that oh-so-valuable experience.

Action—Also labeled Sports, Motion, Pets, or Kids, this mode captures fast-moving action photos, such as track and field events, cars, horses, etc. To prevent blurring, the camera uses a fast shutter speed. Many digicams also include Burst or Continuous modes to shoot several frames quickly with one push of the shutter button.

Beach/Snow—To compensate for the abundance of natural and reflected light that exists in these environments, the

camera adjusts exposure and white balance so that photos don't wash out. Some cameras may also slightly saturate colors to create warmer tones.

Dawn/Twilight—The camera allows for longer exposure and shutter times in these modes to take advantage of the softer and warmer lighting that exists at the times of the day when the sun is closest to Earth. A digicam may also saturate colors and increase the depth of field to keep backgrounds in focus.

Landscape—In Landscape mode, photos will have a greater depth of field, keeping both the foreground and background in focus. Typically, the camera uses the smallest aperture (the size of the lens opening) setting possible. Landscape is good for shooting mountains, lakeshores, skylines, rolling hills, fields, etc.

Macro—To focus on objects, such as flowers, that are very close to the lens (possibly within several centimeters) this mode creates a clear, magnified effect. It is recommended that you use a tripod in this mode to prevent blurring the image.

Night Portrait/Scene—Night Portrait typically uses a flash and slow shutter speed to illuminate a nearby subject while using the night's blackness as a background. Night Scene usually omits a flash but uses very long exposure times and slow shutter speeds to capture skylines or the moon. Use a tripod with both modes to prevent shaking the camera and introducing blur.

Portrait—To keep foreground subjects anywhere from about 2 to 10 feet from the lens in strong focus while blurring the background, you'll want to use Portrait mode. If the subject of the photo is closer than 2 feet or so, use your camera's Macro mode.

Panorama—In Panorama mode, your camera will guide you through taking several photos you can stitch together with software (usually bundled with the camera) to create a single, wide shot. This mode is ideal for group photos, landscapes, etc. **FG**

BY BLAINE FLAMIG

Print Size & Megapixels

Count Your Pixels Before You Print

Printing a digital image is like painting a room—just as you need to know how much paint is required to fully cover the walls, you need to have enough pixels to cover the surface of the paper. If you paint a large living room using only a quart of paint, the walls will look splotchy and the old paint will probably show through. Likewise, if you try to stretch the pixels of a 2MP image to fill an 8x10 print, the picture won't look very good—details will be missing, and it very well may show individual pixels (called pixelization). You probably won't want to share a print created with too few pixels with family and friends; nor will you want to hang it on your wall.

Pixel count isn't the only factor that determines how large you can print your picture; the printer resolution, known as ppi (pixels per inch), you select in your image-editing program will affect print size because it determines how densely the pixels are arranged. To see how changing the ppi will affect the size of your image, open Adobe Photoshop Elements, for example, select Image, Resize, and Image Size; remove the check mark from Resample and put a check mark in Constrain Proportions. Look at the Resolution box: It may be 72ppi if the image came straight out of your camera. However, 72ppi resolution is too low to make a good print, but it is acceptable for emailing a picture to family or posting it to a Web site.

Change the resolution to 300ppi and watch how the height and width automatically decrease because you've increased the ppi density. The height and

width shown in the Image Size dialog box after you changed the ppi to 300 is the maximum print size you can make at that resolution if you want the highest quality print possible.

If you want to make a print that's larger than the recommended size, put a check mark next to Resample in the Adobe Photoshop Elements Image Size dialog box. Elements, using a process called **re-sampling**, will automatically create and

add more pixels to the image so you can make a print larger than the recommended size. Your print may not look as good because Elements actually interpolates the extra pixels needed for the larger print size. See the "Megapixels To Print Optimization Chart" for a breakdown of the optimum maximum print sizes according to camera resolution. **FC**

BY THEANO NIKITAS

Megapixels To Print Optimization Chart

Match your camera's megapixels to the list below to find out the optimum print size. In order to get the best print, you need to have your camera set on the highest quality settings when taking pictures (high resolution/low compression).

Camera Resolution megapixels* (W x H pixels, approx.)	Maximum Print Size At 240ppi (WxH inches, approx.)	Maximum Print Size At 300ppi (WxH inches, approx.)
1MP (1,280 x 960 pixels)	4x5	3x4
2MP (1,600 x 1,200)	5x7	4x5
3MP (2,048 x 1,536)	6x8	5x7
4MP (2,272 x 1,704)	7x9	5x7
5MP (2,592 x 1,944)	8x10	6x8
6MP (2,816 x 2,112)	8x11	7x9
7MP (3,072 x 2,304)	9x12	7x10
8MP (3,264 x 2,448)	10x13	8x10
9MP (3,488 x 2,616)	11x14	8x11
10MP (3,888 x 2,592)	10x16	8x13

*Megapixel = 1 million pixels

Digital Cameras

Meet Your Lifestyle's Needs

Size, weight, megapixels, LCD... the perfect digital camera is out there; you just have to find it. If you are like any of these people, the choice is easier than you think. But don't let your shopping spree end there: Be sure to pick up the must-have accessory, as well. **FG**

For The Shutterbug On A Budget

This camera packs a 3X optical zoom, 7MP, and a 2.5-inch LCD all in a sleek matte silver body, which makes this shooter an excellent purchase for shutterbugs on a budget.



Nikon Coolpix L12 • \$199.99

Don't forget: Lexar Professional SD 1GB memory card (\$19.99)

For The College Student

This 7.1MP digicam with a 3-inch LCD is perfect for showing off your new coed's snapshots, and fast shutter speeds and high ISO ensure the action doesn't need to stop when she has an itchy shutter finger.



Canon PowerShot SD1000 • \$249.99

Don't forget: Canon Selphy DS810 (\$149.99)

For The Novice Photographer

Sometimes simplicity is best. That's why we recommend the Olympus FE-210, with its 7.1MP resolution, 3X optical zoom, and 2.5-inch LCD, to newbie digital photographers.



Olympus FE-210 • \$149.99

Don't forget: Canon PIXMA iP1800 (\$49.99)

For The New Mommy

A new mother would be thrilled with this 7.2MP camera, with which she can create gorgeous 8 x 10-inch prints of her new little bundle.



Sony Cyber-shot DSC-W80 • \$249.99

Don't forget: SanDisk 4GB Memory Stick Pro Duo (\$99.99)

For The Intermediate Photographer

If you're not quite ready for a D-SLR, the 6.1MP Kodak Z612's 12X optical zoom can more than tide you over until you have a bit more experience with interchangeable lenses.



Kodak Z612 • \$249.99

Don't forget: Dynex 60-Inch Universal Tripod (\$29.99)

For The City Girl

At just 1-inch deep and weighing 5 ounces, any jet-setting city girl will be comfortable with this gold 8MP shooter in her pocket or purse. (It's available in other colors, too.)



Kodak EasyShare V803 • \$199.99

Don't forget: Epson StoryTeller Photo Book Creator (\$19.99)

For The Style-Conscious Shutterbug

A hefty optical zoom (5X) and a 3-inch LCD in a sleek, jet black body is what you'll get with this 8.1MP shooter.



Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T10 • \$399.99

Don't forget: Kodak Camera Fashion Handbag (\$34.99)

For The Advanced Digicam User

This impressive D-SLR has a 10.1MP resolution, DIGIC II image processor, an EF-S 18-55mm lens, 2.5-inch LCD, and myriad auto and manual modes.



Canon Digital Rebel XTi • \$899.99

Don't forget: Westinghouse 7-inch Digital Photo Frame (\$119.99)

Digital Imaging Shopping Tips

Buying A Camera Case

BY LEAH HOUCHIN

It's summertime, which means barbecues, vacations, and all sorts of other fun occasions to use your digital camera. Of course, you'll need a good camera bag for when you're on the go; here are some tips to take with you as you shop for one.

Consider size when you buy a camera bag. If you'll use your case only for occasional nights on the town, you won't want to lug around a tote fit for carrying all of your accessories. Frequent vacations or trips to the beach, however, might warrant extra space for additional memory, a set of backup batteries, and a place to stow your sunglasses, cell phone, and keys. Consider how you'll use your camera bag before committing to a purchase.

Available space is especially important for D-SLR photography buffs, who need room for their camera, its lenses, and other accessories, such as filters or a small tripod. Look for bags with divided compartments and extra padding, both of which will protect your camera and its peripherals by preventing them from knocking together. Lowepro's Sling-Shot 200 AW (\$109.99; www.lowepro.com) features a sling-strap design and can hold a D-SLR with a midrange lens attached, four lenses, and other cables and accessories.

Shopping for a camera bag doesn't have to be all business—it's easy to find stylish bags that balance form and function. Take, for example, Kodak's Fashion Camera Wallet (\$34.99; www.kodak.com): It's available in a variety of colors (we

like the classy burgundy); has room for cash, credit cards, and small belongings; and offers a padded interior for extra protection—perfect for a night out with the girls. If you have more to carry, Kodak also offers an attractive Fashion Camera Tote (\$39.99) with more space and adjustable, padded interior dividers.

Summertime is full of fun in the sun, sand, surf, or pool, all of which can be hard on your camera. Protect your investment with a case or skin designed to help your camera brave the elements and allow you to take priceless underwater shots. Many camera makers, such as Sony and Canon, design waterproof casings to fit specific cameras. As an added bonus, these cases or skins often help protect against sand infiltration, as well.

Budgeting is the least appealing aspect of shopping, but it's one of the most necessary. Before shopping, list the features you want and then take a quick look online to get a feel for the price range that you'll be working with. Decide what you're comfortable spending in that range and dive in, whether online or at your local Best Buy. You should have no trouble finding basic, small fundamental bags in the \$10 to \$20 range all the way up to tough, professional-quality bags in the \$100 to \$200 range.

SHOPPING CHECKLIST

☐ What do you want to carry in your bag?

- ☐ A point-and-shoot camera
- ☐ A D-SLR with lens
- ☐ Extra batteries
- ☐ Additional memory
- ☐ Multiple lenses
- ☐ Other personal belongings, such as a cell phone or keys

☐ What kind of protection do you need?

- ☐ Light padding for gentle use
- ☐ Heavier padding for protecting the camera and additional accessories
- ☐ Special protection for underwater use or sandy conditions

☐ How much do you plan to spend?

- ☐ Up to \$50
- ☐ \$50 to \$100
- ☐ \$100 to \$200
- ☐ More than \$200

☐ Notes

CUT HERE

Digital Cameras

5 Must-Have Accessories

Digital cameras capture the memories of events large and small in our lives, and the list of possible accessories is nearly endless. Here are five, though, that we find indispensable.

1 Memory Cards

There is nothing worse than running out of room in your camera or memory card for more pictures—especially when you're on a raft ride down the Colorado River or somewhere even more remote.



Different digital cameras have different memory card slots, so make sure you know what kind of card your camera takes. If you don't know, visit the

Memory Cards & Sticks page on Best Buy's Web site and click the Memory Card Finder link. From there, you'll be prompted to select from drop-down lists your Device, the Manufacturer, and the Model, and a page of specs will pop up telling you not only what kind of media your camera takes, but also detailing the manufacturers and cards (and capacities) available for your camera.

2 Camera Case

You'll find bags and cases in all sizes and with all levels of protection. If you're driving across town to your niece's birthday party, you may want a bag that'll hold a few accessories, too. Make

sure the bag you want has pockets so you can tuck in a spare memory card, another lens, and extra batteries. As you tote your digital camera on a cycling or backpacking trip, look for a sturdy bag with a good deal of padding. You might also prefer a bag with a removable shoulder strap in case you have to check it when you fly. And when you finally take that photo trip snorkeling along the Molokini Crater and want to capture images of this underwater sanctuary, you'll need waterproof housing for the camera. Know that waterproof cases are designed for specific cameras; one size does not fit all.



3 Tripod

If you have loads of family pictures but you're not in any of them, it's time to get a tripod and join the group. The original Joby Gorillapod (\$21.95; www.joby.com) supports point-and-shoot digital cameras that weigh up to 9.7 ounces, and it has flexible legs with grips, so you can wind the legs around stair rails and other odd shapes if there's no flat surface available.



4 Photo Printer

The beauty of a digital camera and photo printer combo is that you print only those pictures you intend to keep. You don't have to print pictures in which your son's eyes are closed or the lighting isn't quite right. With PictBridge-compatible printers, you don't even have to offload your pictures onto your computer before printing them, unless you want to edit them first. Make sure your photo printer houses black and color inks separately so you replace only empty cartridges.



5 Soft Cloth

It's nearly impossible to keep your digital camera free of fingerprints, but you need to use care cleaning off the prints—particularly from the lens.

Avoid using water or cleaning agents on your camera and never use anything on the lens that might scratch it or leave a residue. The DigiPower DPS-LC Lens & Screen Cleaner (\$8.99; www.digipowersolutions.com) is a soft, microfiber cloth that is safe to use when wiping fingerprints, makeup, and other smudges off of your camera's lens and body. **FG**



BY KATHRYN DOLAN

Digital Cameras

Top 5 Things To Know



Even though digital camera prices have dropped significantly in the last few years, buying your first—second, or even third—digital camera is a big investment. These are the five most important things to keep in mind as you're shopping; they'll help you make the right decision when choosing a digital camera.

1 Print sizes.

How many megapixels does the camera have, or, more importantly, what is the largest size print that can be made from that camera? More megapixels doesn't necessarily mean you'll get better pictures, but a camera's megapixel count does affect how large you can print an image. If you don't plan on making large prints, then getting a camera with extra megapixels will be a waste of money and storage space (more megapixels mean larger file sizes, which will fill up your media card more quickly). To determine how many megapixels you need, figure out how large you want to print your images. The rule of thumb is to multiply the dimensions (in inches) of the print you'd like to make by either 300ppi (pixels per inch) or 200ppi. The ppi indicates the print resolution of the image, and either 300ppi or 200ppi will produce a good print. To make an 8x10 print at 200ppi, you'll need a file that measures 1,600 x 2,000 pixels or a 3.2MP camera (1,600 x 2,000 = 3,200,000). Using the same math, the ideal camera resolution for an 8x10 print at 300ppi is 7.2MP.

2 Optical zoom range.

What is the optical zoom range of the lens? Remember, pay attention to optical zoom range only; don't count the digital zoom, which does nothing more than crop the image to make it appear "closer" and may degrade image quality. A zoom goes from wide angle, which is good for landscapes, to telephoto, which is good for photographing distant subjects. Although most point-and-shoot cameras offer limited options in wide angle, there are many choices for telephoto. Choose a zoom that best fits your needs.

3 LCD size.

What is the size and resolution of the LCD? Although a 2-inch LCD is perfectly usable, most digital cameras are equipped with 2.5-inch or even 3-inch LCDs, which generally make it easier to compose a shot, read camera menus, and review images. On the downside, larger LCDs will drain batteries faster than smaller ones. Also check the resolution of the LCD; 115,000 pixels is usable, but generally, 235,000 is sharper.

4 Battery requirements.

There are two things to keep in mind when it comes to batteries: battery type and battery life. Many digicams use proprietary, rechargeable Li-Ion batteries and come with a charger, whereas

other cameras include one-time use AA batteries. While AA batteries are ubiquitous, alkaline and other non-rechargeable batteries will need to be discarded and replaced. A more economical—and environmentally sound—solution is to use NiMH rechargeable AA batteries and a charger. Your camera's battery life is generally rated according to CIPA (Camera & Imaging Products Association) standards, which will give you an average amount of photos you can shoot on one charge. Obviously, the higher the CIPA rating, the better. CIPA ratings can usually be found on manufacturer Web sites.

5 Media card.

What type of media card does the camera use? Most digital cameras—including sub-\$1,000 digital SLRs—use SD cards, which come in different capacities and speeds. The number of images you can fit on a card depends on the camera's megapixel count and the resolution or quality level you select when shooting. Determine the maximum number of images you want to put on the card; that will help decide what capacity card you need. Also, find out if the card is SDHC (Secure Digital High Capacity)-compatible and will work with high-capacity (4GB) SD cards. Only cameras with an SDHC designation (available on most manufacturers' Web sites) are capable of using a card with more than a 2GB capacity. **FC**

BY THEANO NIKITAS

Digital Imaging Glossary



Confused about what certain terms on that camera box mean? Use this glossary to help decode the world of digital photography.

aperture—An iris-like diaphragm opening that can expand and contract the lens opening to let you control the amount of light that passes through it, thus affecting the exposure. The term “f-stop” is used interchangeably with aperture.

burst mode—Where the camera can take several shots (up to 10) consecutively, usually in one second.

CCD—Charge-coupled device, which is the camera’s image-sensing component. It converts light into energy that can be stored as digital data on your camera.

depth of field—The area of a photo that is in focus.

digital zoom—Magnifying an image digitally by cropping it and filling in the rest with interpolated pixels, thus degrading the quality. Even though the numbers seem impressive, never choose a camera based on digital zoom.

f-stop—See aperture. Smaller f-stop numbers mean a wider lens opening; larger f-stop numbers mean a narrower lens opening.

ISO—For digital cameras, the ISO setting measures the sensitivity to light (similar to how it does with film). Digital camera ISO settings, such as 200, 400, etc., should capture photos as if one were using film with such a speed.

Lower ISO settings mean you need more light, and vice versa.

LCD—The screen on the back of the camera that lets you see a live-action view of your subject, your photo after you’ve taken it, or both.

lens—The apparatus on the front of the camera that gathers and directs light towards the imaging device. In a digital camera, the lens probably has both an optical zoom and digital zoom.

megapixel—Approximately 1 million pixels. The higher the megapixel count, the higher the resolution and the more you can crop, which means (in general) better-quality photos.

memory card—Because digital cameras have very little on-board memory, they need a flash memory card to store more than a dozen or so images. The type of memory card you need depends on your camera make and model. Some of the most popular memory cards are Secure Digital, MultiMediaCard, Compact Flash, and Sony Memory Sticks. In general, memory cards are quite small.

noise—The small statistical variations among pixels that lead to (usually) minor distortions of color in a photo.

optical zoom—The ability to move the lens physically closer to your subject. With optical zoom, the higher the number (such as 5X or 10X), the better. When choosing a camera, always consider the optical zoom, not the digital zoom.

resolution—The number of pixels in an image. The higher the resolution,



the more detail and quality in a photo. Resolution is measured in a proportion (such as 2,272 x 1,704).

shutter—A mechanism that opens and closes to allow light to pass through the lens. You can usually control the shutter’s speed.

shutter speed—The length of time a camera’s shutter is open to let light through the lens to hit the sensor, which records the image. This is expressed in fractions of a second: for instance, a shutter speed of 1/250 means that the shutter speed is 1/250th of a second.

viewfinder—The small opening in the camera that the user looks through to frame a shot. Some digital cameras don’t have a viewfinder; instead, use the LCD to frame the shot.

white balance—Light levels are adjusted electronically to ensure whites (and thus other colors) are pure, leading to more lifelike color. White balance can usually be manually adjusted, too.

Which Camera Is Best For You?

If you're a little confused about the most important features in a digital camera, you're not alone. In this chart, we compare features from select digital cameras available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com), and we also explain what these features mean. If that still has you cross-eyed, we recommend the models for certain lifestyles.

		Point & Shoot		
What It Is	What It Means	Canon PowerShot SD750	Canon PowerShot SD1000	Kodak EasyShare V803
Resolution	In general, more pixels mean bigger, clearer prints	7.1MP	7.1MP	8MP
Optical zoom	Moves the lens physically closer to your subject	3X	3X	3X
Memory card	Removeable card that stores your photos in your camera	SD/SDHC/MMC	SD/SDHC/MMC	SD/MMC
LCD size	The LCD is the display on the back of the camera	3 inches	2.5 inches	2.5 inches
Battery life	Based on how many shots you can take on a single charge	210 images	210 images	200 images
ISO	Light sensitivity; the higher the ISO, the greater the ability to take photos in low-light situations	Auto; High ISO auto; Manual: 80, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600	Auto; High ISO Auto; Manual: 80, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600	Auto; Manual: 80, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600
Print sizes up to (at 240ppi)		9x12 inches	9x12 inches	10x13 inches
Perfect for		Intermediate digicam users who like sharing photos with friends and family	Families who will be shooting in a variety of settings and conditions	Anyone looking to invest in her first digital camera
MSRP		\$449.99	\$349.99	\$199.99



Canon PowerShot SD750
8266191



Canon PowerShot SD1000
8266486



Nikon CoolPix L11
8257726



Olympus Stylus 760
8278428

D-SLR

	Nikon CoolPix L11	Olympus Stylus 760	Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T100	Canon Digital Rebel XTi	Nikon D40
	6MP	7.1MP	8.1MP	10.1MP	6.1MP
	3X	3X	5X	EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-22*	18-55mm f/3.5 - f/5.6 ED II AF-S DX Zoom-Nikkor lens*
	SD/SDHC	xD-Picture Card	Memory Stick Duo/PRO Duo	CompactFlash	SD/SDHC
	2.4 inches	2.5 inches	3 inches	2.5 inches	2.5 inches
	250 images with alkaline; 600 with lithium	220 images	340 images	300 images	470 images
	Auto; Manual: 100, 200, 400, 800	Auto; Manual: 80, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600	Auto; Manual: 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600, 3,200	Auto; Manual: 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600	Auto; Manual: 200, 400, 800, 1,600
	8x11 inches	9x12 inches	10x13 inches	10x16 inches	8x11 inches
	Busy parents who are looking for a bargain entry-level camera	Active users who will shoot while out in all types of weather	Users who want a full-featured camera in a small package	Confident camera users experienced with using SLRs	A newbie to the D-SLR arena
	\$149.99	\$249.99	\$399.99	\$899.99	\$599.99

*These two lenses are for D-SLR cameras, and thus, there's no established equivalent to optical zoom. Talk to your Best Buy Digital Imaging specialist for more information.



Kodak EasyShare V803
8257502



Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T100
8223362



Canon Digital Rebel XTi
7989901



Nikon D40
8139169

Which Digital Camcorder Is Right For You?

Digital camcorders come in a number of formats: DVD, hard drive, MiniDV, and high-definition are the most common. By comparing the following digital camcorders available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com), you can determine which format best fits your style.

What It Is	What It Means	DVD		DVD/HDD
		Sony 3.0MP Handycam DCR-DVD408	Canon DC220	Hitachi 30GB DZHS500A
LCD screen size	Diagonal length of viewing screen	2.7 inches	2.7 inches	2.7 inches
Optical zoom	The number of times the lens can enlarge or reduce the field of view; the better type of zoom	10X	35X	30X
Digital zoom	The number of times the camcorder can magnify a portion of an image; may result in loss of resolution	80X	1,000X	1,000X
Recording speeds	The type of speed and (if available) maximum amount of time that can be recorded in each	HQ: 20 min. SP: 30 min. LP: 60 min. (single layer)	XP: 20 min. SP: 30 min. LP: 60 min. (single layer)	XTRA: 6 hours FINE: 11 hours STD: 22 hours (to hard drive)
Memory card	Type of flash memory cards compatible with the camcorder (cards not included unless noted)	Memory Stick Duo	miniSD	SD
Digital still resolution	The number of megapixels the camcorder can capture in still images	4MP	6.8MP	3.3MP
Lines of resolution	Number of lines of horizontal resolution; the higher the number, the greater the detail	530	768	480
Weight	Weight of the camcorder (without battery, unless noted)	1.3 pounds	14.2 ounces	1 pound
Perfect for		Novices who want to learn on a loaded camcorder	Home movie enthusiasts	Those who want to record in large blocks of time
Coolest feature		Super SteadyShot stabilization system minimizes shake and vibration	On-board editing software lets you rearrange footage	No need for a separate PC to record video to as many DVDs as you want
MSRP		\$699.99	\$449.99	\$799.99



Sony Handycam DCR-DVD408
8207969



Canon DC220
8223308



Hitachi 30GB ZHS500A
N/A



JVC 30GB GZ-MG555
8224968

	Hard Drive		MiniDV	MiniDV/HD	High-Def
	JVC 30GB GZ-MG555	Sony 60GB DCR-SR82	Canon ZR-850	Canon HV20	JVC HD Everio GZ-HD7
	2.7 inches	2.7 inches	2.7 inches	2.7 inches	2.7 inches
	10X	25X	35X	10X	10X
	1,000X	2,000X	1,000X	200X	200X
	Ultra: 7 hours FINE Norm Eco: 37.5 hours	HQ: 14 hours SP: 21 hours LP: 41 hours	SP: 80 min. LP: 120 min.	SP: 80 min. LP	HQ-VBR LT-VBR CBR
	SDHC/SD	Memory Stick Duo and Pro	SD/MMC	miniSD	SD
	5MP	1MP	1.07MP	3.1MP	2.1MP
	540	520	864	1,080	1,080
	14.4 ounces	14 ounces (with battery)	13.4 ounces	1.2 pounds	14.4 ounces
	Auto Illumi-Light brightens your subject in low-light situations	Included Handycam Station enables one- click disc burning	Three zoom speeds that ensure steady zoom and pan shots	24p Cinema mode, so you can capture video with the same frame rate profes- sional filmmakers use	The ability to play back video in true high definition
	Those wanting a lightweight, long- recording camera	Those who want to edit their movies on their PC	Those looking for an affordable, compact model	For home theater owners	Anyone who loves high def
	\$899.99	\$749.99	\$329	\$1,099	\$1,699



Sony 60GB DCR-SR82
8209379



Canon ZR850
8212249



Canon HV20
8220061



JVC HD Everio GZ-HD7
8225066

Which Photo Printer Is Right For You?

If you print digital photos at home frequently, or would like to, then a dedicated photo printer may be a better option than an all-in-one. Photo printers at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) offer a variety of features in a wide range of prices.

What It Is	What It Means	Epson PictureMate Snap	Epson High-Definition R260	Epson Stylus R800
Photo print speed	How fast it can print one image	45 seconds (4x6)	13 seconds (4x6)	45 seconds (5x7)
Resolution	Dots per inch (or dpi)—the more, the better	5,760 x 720	5,760 x 1,440	5,760 x 1,440
Ink cartridges	How many cartridges the printer uses	1	6	8
Paper sizes	Sizes of paper compatible with the printer	4x6	8.5x11.5, 8.5x14, A4, B5, A5, A6, half letter, executive, custom sizes	Letter, legal A4, statement, executive, custom, 4x6, 5x7, 8x10, panoramic, and more
PC-free printing	The ability to print images directly from camera	Yes	Yes	No
Memory card	Type of memory card the computer can accept and recognize	CompactFlash, SD, SDHC miniSD, MMC, Memory Stick, and more	No	No
Wireless connectivity	The ability to communicate with other peripherals with no wires	Yes, with optional Bluetooth print adapter	No	No
Dimensions	Height x width x depth	5.7x8.5x6 inches	11.1x17.7x21 inches	7.8x19.5x12.1 inches
Perfect for		Photographers on the go	Scrapbookers	High-gloss prints
Coollest feature		Can operate on rechargeable battery (not included)	Produces border-free images in four print sizes/prints on CDs and DVDs	Included holder for printing on paper rolls
MSRP		\$149.99	\$99.99	\$399



Epson Picture-Mate Snap
7955359



Epson High-Definition R260
7954387



Epson Stylus R800
6389561



Canon Selphy DS810
7330738

	Canon Selphy Compact Photo Printer DS810	Canon PIXMA Photo Printer iP6700D	Canon PIXMA Photo Printer Pro9000	HP Photosmart Portable Photo Printer A617	Kodak EasyShare 5300 All-In-One
	63 seconds (4x6)	47 seconds (4x6)	30 seconds (4x6)	39 seconds (4x6)	28 seconds (4x6)
	4,800 x 1,200	9,600 x 2,400	4,800 x 2,400	4,800 x 1,200	4,800 x 1,200
	1	6	8	1	2
	4x6, credit card, photo stickers	Letter, legal, credit card, 4x6, 4x8, 5x7, 8x10, #10 envelopes	Letter, legal, 4x6, 4x8, 5x7, 8x10, 13x19, #10 envelopes	4x6, 4x6.5, 4x8, 5x7, 4x12	A, A4, 3x5, 4x6, 4x8, 4x12, 5x7, 6x9, 8x10, 11x14
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	CompactFlash, SmartMedia, Microdrive, MMC plus Memory Stick Duo and PRO Duo, miniSD, and xD-Picture Card with optional adapter	CompactFlash, SD, MMC, Memory Stick/PRO, SmartMedia, Microdrive, plus others (some with optional adapter)	No	CompactFlash, SD, MMC, Memory Stick/Duo, xD-Picture Card, plus miniSD with optional adapter	CompactFlash, SD, MMC, Memory Stick, Memory Stick Pro, xD-Picture Card, Microdrive
	Yes, with optional Bluetooth print adapter	Yes, with optional Bluetooth print adapter	No	Yes, with optional Bluetooth print adapter	Yes
	3.9x8.7x8.7 inches	7.3x16.9x12 inches	7.6x26x14 inches	5.1x9.9x4.6 inches	8.8x18.8x14.7 inches
	Those wanting a low-cost printer	Those wanting high-res photos	Serious photographers	Those wanting quick fixes for image problems	A home office user on a budget
	Compact size	Two-sided printing	Supports wide variety of paper types, including fine art	HP Photo Fix button for automatic corrections	Photo prints cost around 10 cents with Kodak Value Pack (not included)
	\$149.99	\$179.99	\$499.99	\$129.99	\$199.99



Canon PIXMA iP6700D
7919407



Canon PIXMA Pro9000
8030631



HP Photosmart A617
7893862



Kodak EasyShare 5300
8250304

24/7 Access

Build Your Wireless Home Network Around A Fast Router



Belkin N1 Wireless Router
\$129.99 • www.belkin.com



Apple AirPort Extreme Wireless N Base Station
\$179.99 • www.apple.com



Belkin N1 Wireless ExpressCard • \$99.99

As you build a wireless home network, remember this principle: You should be able to access your data anywhere, anytime.

Mike Scott, the technical media manager for D-Link, which makes networking devices, knows from working with his own home network how the right components can mean the difference between a network that just works and one that works 24/7.

To get the most out of your network, Scott advises that you begin with a high-quality router.

A Speedy Hub

The newest routers are based on the 802.11n wireless standard, a new technology that is 10 times faster than the 802.11g standard.

The Belkin N1 Wireless-N Router (\$129.99; www.belkin.com) employs MIMO (Multiple Input/Multiple Output) technology—in this case, three antennas—to

improve speed and increase coverage throughout your home. You can theoretically transfer data as quickly as 300Mbps with this router, though you won't reach that speed when using the Wireless-N for streaming high-definition video or multiplayer gaming.

The D-Link Xtreme N Gigabit router (\$179.99; www.dlink.com) has four gigabit Ethernet ports, which noticeably speed up data transfer. Like other 802.11n-compliant routers, it doesn't require range extenders or boosters, so you need not worry that the router will work better in certain places in your house than in others.

With three transmitters and three receivers, the Xtreme N is so powerful that it needs a Good Neighbor mode. The router can detect if your neighbor is using his wireless network and will power down a bit so as not to interfere with it.

Apple makes the AirPort Extreme Wireless N Base Station (\$179.99; www.apple.com) for Macs and PCs running

Windows XP SP2. Like the other routers, it uses MIMO, 802.11n-compliant technology. It also has a USB port for

Always-On Repository

The problem with accessing content on your PC through your home network is that you have to turn on your PC first. Granted, that's a minor problem, but there's another way to store your digital photos, music, movies, and more.

D-Link's Mike Scott says a storage unit, such as the DNS-323 2-Bay Storage Enclosure (\$229.99; www.dlink.com), will let you have an always-on repository for all of your content. By inserting one or two 3.5-inch SATA hard drives (not included) into the enclosure, the storage unit backs up the content for your PC and streams it to your media player, regardless of whether your PC is on. ●



D-Link Xtreme N Gigabit router
\$179.99 • www.dlink.com



D-Link DNS-323 2-Bay Storage
Enclosure • \$229.99



D-Link DPR-1260 RangeBooster
\$99.99

connecting an external hard drive or printer, supports up to 50 computers, and has a time-based access feature that you can use to limit your kids' access to the network during certain times of day.

Incorporate Home Entertainment

In addition to using your router to connect multiple PCs and/or notebooks, you can incorporate other components in your network. (See the "Always-On Repository" sidebar above for more

information.) For example, you can connect your home entertainment system to your PC to access the content on your computer through your TV.

To do this, you'll need a wireless media player. The D-Link DSM-320RD Wireless Media Player (\$284.99) lets you stream multimedia content, such as photos, music, and movies, from your computer to the TV. It also includes a DVD player and 5-in-1 memory card reader, so you can transfer content to devices not connected to your network, too. (NOTE:

The high-definition DSM-750 media player, based on 802.11n, will be released later this year, and no price was available at press time.)

Raise The Standard

As you shop for components for your wireless home network, you may find that some, such as the routers we've mentioned, are backward-compatible with 802.11g, 802.11b, and perhaps even 802.11a devices. However, using 802.11n-compliant devices with those based on the older standards will slow the throughput on your network.

If possible, replace older devices with 802.11n-compliant products as they become available, especially if you plan to include an HDTV and media player in your network. At the very least, see if components based on older standards can be upgraded to the new standard (see the "Boost Your Notebook's Bandwidth" sidebar). **FC**

Boost Your Notebook's Bandwidth

Don't leave your notebook out of the home-network loop. It's easy to upgrade your laptop so it can take advantage of the new 802.11n wireless standard.

If your notebook has an ExpressCard slot, then you'll need an ExpressCard. Consider the Belkin N1 Wireless ExpressCard (\$99.99; www.belkin.com) or the D-Link Xtreme N Notebook ExpressCard (\$99.99; www.dlink.com).

Both Belkin and D-Link make cards for standard slots, too: the Belkin N1 Wireless-N Notebook Card (\$89.99) and the D-Link Xtreme N Wireless-N Notebook Card (\$99.99), respectively. ●

BY RACHEL DEROWITTSCH

Work Without Wires

Wireless Products Put Your Home Office On The Air



Linksys WRT55AG Router
\$149 • www.linksys.com



Netgear WG311 Wireless Card
\$59.99 • www.netgear.com



Linksys WGA54G Gaming Adapter
\$99.99



D-Link RangeBooster Print Server
\$99.99 • www.dlink.com

Ever notice something fishy in all those magazine spreads featuring gorgeous home offices? Where the heck are the wires? Wouldn't it be nice if your home office could somehow look that pristine? With a few exceptions, it can, provided you incorporate all of the latest wireless technologies.

Wireless Routers

First, you'll need a router (also called a gateway or Internet Access Point). Routers use wireless standards, such as 802.11b, 802.11g, and 802.11a. For maximum compatibility, look for a router that supports all three standards, such as the Linksys WRT55AG Dual-Band 2.4Ghz Wireless A+G Broadband Router With 4-Port Switch (\$149; www.linksys.com).

802.11g and 802.11a are newer and faster than the older 802.11b wireless standard, but there is an emerging standard called 802.11n that is up to 10 to 14 times faster than 802.11g or 802.11a. Speed is important because 802.11b isn't suitable for streaming video wirelessly, while 802.11g and 802.11a can stream DVD-quality video and transfer large folders across the network very quickly. 802.11n is fast enough to stream high-definition video and can move large files and folders in a very short time.

If you see a router labeled "pre-n," "SpeedBoost," or something similar, it sends and receives data at near-802.11n speeds, but only with products from the same manufacturer as the router that support identical speed-boosting technology.

Wireless NICs, Bridges & Print Servers

When you want to connect a network-ready device, such as a TiVo, Nintendo Wii, or laptop computer, to a wireless network, the first thing to check is whether it supports a wireless NIC (Network Interface Card). If so, save some money by going with a wireless card, such as the Netgear WG311 802.11G Wireless Desktop Card (\$59.99; www.netgear.com). If the device doesn't support a wireless NIC, you'll have to use a more expensive device called a wireless bridge, such as the Linksys WGA54G 802.11g Wireless Gaming Adapter (\$99.99; www.linksys.com).

Network-ready printers work with wireless bridges, but if you have a USB or parallel port printer that isn't network-compatible, you can still connect it wirelessly using a wireless print server such as the D-Link DPR-1260 RangeBooster G Wireless USB Multi-Function Print Server (\$99.99; www.dlink.com). Wireless printer servers let you put the

printer anywhere your wireless network can reach.

Bluetooth

Keep an eye out for Bluetooth-enabled products such as the Palm Tungsten E2 (\$199; www.palm.com) PDA, the Canon PIXMA MP810 Photo All-In-One Printer/Copier/Scanner (\$299.99; www.usa.canon.com), and the Microsoft Wireless Entertainment Desktop 7000 (\$149.95; www.microsoft.com) keyboard and mouse combo. These devices connect to a PC using a wireless network that is completely separate from the one your router creates. Bluetooth isn't nearly as fast as the wireless home network outlined above, and the range is limited to 30 feet or less, but the technology is reliable and isn't prone to interference from other wireless products.

Put It All Together

You can read "24/7 Access" on page 54 for instructions on creating a wireless home network, but there's at least one cardinal rule to keep in mind: Pay attention to the radio frequencies all of your devices use and try to avoid things that overlap (such as a cordless phones and a wireless router) to reduce cross-interference. **EG**

BY TRACY BAKER

Thinking About Vista?

The Lowdown On The Latest OS

Vista is the first operating system from Microsoft to offer so many different versions. Here's an easy way to decide which one is right for you.

Home Basic

\$99.95 upgrade • \$199 retail



Computer users who want the Vista experience but use their PCs for basic tasks (sending email, viewing photos, and browsing online) will be happy with the Home Basic edition. Windows Defender and Windows Firewall create a more secure environment than what was available in Windows XP, and the new Instant Search feature helps you find what you need. Also in this edition are Internet Explorer 7, the new Network And Sharing Center, and Windows Mail, the replacement for Outlook Express that helps protect from phishing and other email scams.

Home Premium

\$159 upgrade • \$239 retail



This edition builds on the Basic edition to deliver the ideal environment for home desktop and mobile users. With Home Premium, users get Windows Media Center, Windows Movie Maker, Windows DVD Maker, and other goodies for handling all of their entertainment needs. The new Aero interface is also introduced in this edition, providing a fresh take on menus, graphical elements, and windows. The Windows Mobility Center and included support for tablet PCs make life easier for mobile users. Scheduled Backup and Windows Meeting Space are also included in this edition.

Business

\$199 upgrade • \$299 retail



The Business edition of Vista was designed specifically with small-business users in mind. It retains most of the features of the Home Premium edition; although it does not include Windows Media Center, Windows DVD Maker, or Windows Movie Maker. The focus here is on providing a secure computing environment that is simple to use. Small business offices that are hoping to expand their horizons will be happy with the ease with which this edition allows networking and interaction with mobile users.

Ultimate

\$259 upgrade • \$399 retail



Touted as the most comprehensive operating system in the Vista family, the Ultimate package gives you everything you need for work and play. This edition includes everything in the Home Premium edition, plus all of the features that the Business edition offers. As the most complete of Vista's editions, Ultimate also includes the exclusive Windows Ultimate Extras, which is a group of publications, programs, and services for Vista Ultimate users, and BitLocker, which prevents data thieves from accessing info on a locked drive.

Minimum System Requirements

- 1GHz processor
- 512MB system memory
- 20GB hard drive with at least 15GB available space
- Support for DirectX 9 graphics card with 32MB of graphics memory
- DVD-ROM drive
- Internet access

- 1GHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor*
- 1GB system memory
- 40GB hard drive; 15GB free
- Support for DirectX graphics with WDDM Driver, 128MB of graphics memory (minimum), Pixel Shader 2.0 in hardware, 32 bits per pixel
- DVD-ROM drive
- Internet access
- TV tuner for TV functionality

- 1GHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor*
- 1GB system memory
- 40GB hard drive with at least 15GB free
- Support for DirectX graphics with WDDM Driver, 128MB of graphics memory (minimum), Pixel Shader 2.0 in hardware, 32 bits per pixel
- DVD-ROM drive
- Internet access

- 1GHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor*
- 1GB system memory
- 40GB hard drive; 15GB free
- Support for DirectX graphics with WDDM Driver, 128MB of graphics memory (minimum), Pixel Shader 2.0 in hardware, 32 bits per pixel
- DVD-ROM drive
- Internet access
- TV tuner for TV functionality

*Only Windows Vista Business and Ultimate support dual-core processors.

Fun Software

All Work & No Play Makes Jack A Dull Boy

Whether you heard that phrase in the "The Shining" or read a version of it in the works of the 2400 B.C. Egyptian philosopher

Ptahhoptep, the intent is much the same: Have a little fun once in a while so you can expand your horizons and enjoy yourself a bit. With a computer, it's especially easy to

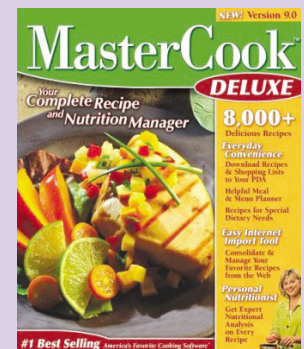
get caught up in the work-only aspects and never realize the fun you could be having. Here are a few ways you can relax and have fun with your computer.

Create A Family Tree

If you've been working too hard to explore your family's roots, now's a perfect time to begin tracing your ancestry. Public records, such as marriage licenses and death certificates, are available in online, searchable databases, but if you don't know where to look, your search could be fruitless. Genealogy programs, such as Family Tree Maker v. 16 (\$39.95; www.familytreemaker.com), will help direct your search for records, photos, and information, and it'll help you organize your findings into a multimedia record you'll be proud to share with your family and pass on to the coming generations.

Kitchen Delights

There's nothing like a home-cooked meal, except maybe 8,000+ of them! You'll never get tired of cooking again if you vary the meals with recipes from MasterCook Deluxe 9.0 (\$19.99; www.valuesoft.com). And if pulling together even one meal sounds daunting, work your way through the Critical Cooking Fundamentals to learn basic cooking techniques. You'll also find nutritional analyses for recipes, help creating shopping lists, and tips for pulling together a menu for a sizeable party.



Self-Improvement

Teaching yourself typing may not seem like an obvious avenue for self-improvement, but if you've never learned to type, mastering a keyboard will help you locate books at the library (most card catalogs are computerized now), balance your checkbook (banking online makes keeping track of your accounts easy), and respond with more detail to emails. Even if you already know how to type, Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing 17 (\$19.99; www.broderbund.com) will improve your speed and efficiency, so you don't have to hunt and peck your way through your office correspondence.



Language Immersion

Most of us took French, German, or Spanish in high school, but it's a use-it-or-lose-it proposition, and few of us use the language enough to retain it. If you'd like to brush up on your Spanish skills, for instance, or even learn it from scratch, Berlitz Spanish Premier (\$39.95; www.novadevelopment.com) lets you work at your own pace, without the pressure of classroom performance. With the eight-CD set, you can listen to audio CDs in your car as you commute to work, download the vocabulary component to your MP3 player and listen as you exercise, play games on your computer to help familiarize you with the language, and much more.

Computers don't have to be dull, and neither do you. Take a look at the software in the Hobbies & Self-Improvement section at BestBuy.com for more ideas on ways to be productive and simultaneously have fun. **FG**

BY KATHRYN DOLAN

Computer Shopping Tips

Buying A Laptop

BY MARTY SEMS



notebook computer gives you a lot of power along with a lot of freedom. You'll be able to surf the Web and do anything a desktop computer will let you do, unlike with a smartphone. And you'll be free to fold up a laptop and easily take it anywhere, unlike a desktop. Go ahead and tear out this page to help you as you shop.

It's a real balancing act to buy a notebook these days. On the one hand, you want a big, wide screen and the blazing speed of a desktop. On the other hand, you want a battery that will last several hours without a recharge. Unfortunately, with today's batteries, you'll have to balance performance against battery life while still including the features that are important to you. For instance, you may need to accept a processor with a lower speed to compensate for a big screen or buy a heavier notebook with a battery that will last long enough to play an entire DVD movie. A good software bundle, a long warranty, and a nice price can't hurt.

You'll definitely want to choose a dual-core processor, plus at least 1GB of RAM. These two items will keep the laptop responsive with today's and tomorrow's software. If you're opting for Windows Vista for the operating system, consider even more RAM.

Storage space is fairly self-explanatory: The more you have, the better. However, new developments give you options beyond the traditional hard drive. New hybrid drives combine flash memory with hard drive mechanisms to increase speed and

battery life for a moderately higher price. A few special laptops even replace the hard drive entirely with fast, power-efficient SSDs (solid-state disks), but these are very expensive thus far and may not be available in your local Best Buy store just yet. A hybrid drive seems to be the smartest option right now, although you'll need an operating system that can make full use of it, such as Windows Vista.

Don't forget the other features you'll want in a new computer. If you'd like a Web cam, look for a laptop with a video camera built right in or included as a peripheral. Opt for an upscale BD (Blu-ray Disc) or HD DVD drive if you want to play the latest high-definition movies (but you'll need a screen with at least a 1,280 x 720 resolution to appreciate HD). And to help keep your data private, make sure that the built-in wireless networking supports WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access) or WPA2 security.

Finally, ask your local Best Buy associate whether you can try out a laptop in the store before you buy. You'll be able to get a feel for how fast the notebook is at common tasks.

SHOPPING CHECKLIST

☐ Which screen size?

- ☐ 20.1-inch
- ☐ 17-inch
- ☐ 15.4-inch
- ☐ 13.3-inch

☐ What kind of processor?

- ☐ Dual-core (Intel Core 2 Duo, Core Duo, Pentium Dual-Core; AMD Turion 64 X2)
- ☐ Single-core (Intel Core Solo, Pentium M, Celeron M; AMD Turion 64, Sempron)

☐ How much RAM?

- ☐ 2GB
- ☐ 1GB
- ☐ 512MB

☐ Which operating system?

- ☐ Windows Vista
- ☐ Windows XP
- ☐ Mac OS X (Apple notebooks only)

☐ What type/size of hard drive?

- ☐ 60GB
- ☐ 120GB
- ☐ 160GB
- ☐ 200GB
- ☐ Hybrid drive
- ☐ SSD (solid-state disk)

☐ Notes

Computers

5 Must-Have Accessories

If you have a computer, you're undoubtedly going to want a few accessories to go with it. Here, we'll mention five that we consider necessities to our computing experiences.

1 Software: The following programs are must-haves for any computer: a security program and a productivity suite. The Internet is amazing; in minutes, you can pay your bills, catch up on the latest national and local news, try to order tickets to The Police, and instant message your sister in Malawi. But malicious programs, such as viruses and spyware, are a fact of connected life. A good security suite with antivirus and firewall components will help minimize the threats you encounter. Office productivity suites usually include word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation programs (at minimum). With a word processor, such as Microsoft Word, you can create fax sheets and resumés, and you can set up spreadsheets to track your investments and mark the progress of your weight-loss regimen.



2 External Storage: An external drive, such as the Maxtor One-Touch III (\$219.99; www.maxtorsolutions.com), lets you back up your data. Its

500GB of space will give you ample room to back up your entire system or just the pictures of your kids, financial data, and a few emails from friends that you'd hate to lose if your hard drive fails. You might consider an external DVD-RW/CD-RW drive, such as the Samsung SE-W184M (\$125.99; www.samsung.com), so you can back up the info on your hard drive to DVD and store the discs somewhere outside your home. External drives usually attach to your computer pretty easily with either a FireWire or USB 2.0 cable.



3 Printer: If you occasionally need a hard copy of a document, you like to create digital files of the pictures your daughter sends of your grandson, or you like to print your own digital photos, you'll appreciate an all-in-one device that lets you print, copy, and scan. Many of these devices let you print borderless 4x6 pictures directly from your camera (or memory card). To print directly from your camera, the camera and printer will

both have to be PictBridge compatible. To print from a memory card, the printer needs a compatible card slot.



4 Backup Power: Summer can be stormy, with lightning strikes and power outages, either of which can damage or destroy delicate electronics. Protect your computer (and data) with a power conditioner. The unit provides surge protection and battery backup so you have a few minutes to save your data and turn off your computer in a sudden loss of power. See "Clean Power" on page 16 for more information on line conditioners.



5 Cleaning Supplies: Computers, and especially keyboards and mice, present unique cleaning challenges. They are dust and fingerprint magnets, but they're hard to keep clean because you shouldn't use alcohol-based or abrasive cleaners or even plain old water on any of the components. Antistatic wipes help keep the dust off of delicate LCDs, and compressed air will blow the dust and crumbs from among the keys on your keyboard. Most often, antistatic wipes are safe to use on notebook screens and CRTs, as well. **FG**

BY KATHRYN DOLAN

Computers

Top 5 Things To Know

No matter what your skill level, there are a few basics everyone should know in order to enjoy the most productive, safest computing experience possible. Here are our Top 5.

1 Prevent data loss. If you're in the market for a new computer now, it's smart to make sure you know exactly what extras you'll need once you get home. Besides the keyboard, mouse, monitor, and tower, you'll want to get a good surge protector that will keep your new investment safe from damage as a result of a power outage or electrical surge. A UPS (uninterruptible power supply) is even better than a surge protector because it has a battery that keeps the power flowing smoothly even after an outage. This will give you time to properly shut down the computer to avoid data loss.

2 Protect yourself. Antivirus and firewall software are two things you'll need to protect your computer if you plan to go online. There are many third-party products available for both antivirus and firewall protection, but you may elect to use built-in programs such as Windows XP's firewall. (Built-in antivirus is not available with WinXP.) Regardless of what protective software you decide to use, make sure you keep it enabled and set to the product's recommended settings. The trick

to ensuring your firewall and antivirus do their job is that you have to keep them up-to-date. Most programs have a method for allowing you to manually (or your computer to automatically) check for updates so the software can detect new viruses, scams, and the like.



3 Perform backups. Even if you have been vigilant about keeping your computer running well, you'll likely experience a computer crash at some time. Whether it's a problem with your operating system or a burned-out hardware component, unless you have backed up the information on your computer, you may not be able to get it back—ever. Avoid this headache and heartache by developing a regular backup schedule. One simple way to secure your information in another location is to save it to an external drive once a week.

4 Consult an expert. If you run into a computer problem you can't fix, don't be afraid to seek

help. Clicking through error messages or putting up with slow processing speeds isn't just annoying; it can also be a sign of a larger problem. Before you lose your valuable time and data, get a professional to help put things right. There are many options out there, including Best Buy's Geek Squad. This "24-hour computer support task force" offers carry-in, phone, and on-site support. The squad also makes house calls.

5 Budget for extras. Shopping for new computers these days can be tempting. It's pretty easy to get a system for around \$500, but don't let that low number fool you. Remember that owning a computer comes with some additional expenses. For starters, some computers at the sub-\$500 price point don't include a monitor, so you'll want to watch for that and figure it in if necessary. If you don't already have one, you'll need to buy a printer and USB cable if you want to print anything. Also factor in your monthly ISP fee and look into whether you'll have to pay for a high-speed modem and installation or if they're included. Other extras could include productivity software such as Microsoft Office (you won't get this at sub-\$500, either), security software subscription fees, printer ink and paper, and a digital camera. **FG**

BY JENNIE SCHLUETER

Leave It To The PC Pros

Best Buy's  Can Get It Done

Today's computers can handle your entertainment, financial, shopping, communication, and business needs like never before. But from the moment you power on your new PC, you'll have to fight spyware, viruses, and online predators; troubleshoot and repair error messages; configure new and old hardware and software; and regularly install updates and patches. Aren't computers great?

Send In The Geeks

Like g-men with pocket protectors, the agents of Best Buy's Geek Squad (www.bestbuy.com/geeksquad) are there to handle all of your PC setup, repair, and installation needs.

New PC setup and security. The Geek Squad agents can streamline your system with over 100 in-depth tweaks, install and configure security software and other software updates, get rid of unnecessary software that comes preloaded on

your computer, create a restore CD, and even offer secure online storage.

Repairs and upgrades. Best Buy's team can also unfreeze locked systems, recover data from crashes, and improve poor performance. The Geek Squad's basic service fixes software, removes virus and spyware, and cleans your PC. You can upgrade to get security and privacy software installed and configured, and you can hire the Geek Squad to upgrade your operating system.

Wireless networking. If you want to communicate more efficiently among multiple computers, the Geek Squad can help you accomplish that, as well as with setting up a PC network in your home; connecting two network-capable devices (such as gaming consoles,

desktop and laptop computers, print servers, and more); and even with securing your wireless network.

Data protection. If you have data you just can't lose (and we all do), the Geek Squad offers both a one-time backup service and an automated backup service. The squad can clean and remove sensitive files from a hard drive you're planning to sell or discard.

Who You Gonna Call?

Once you've made the decision to buy a new PC, you aren't on your own to keep it working. Just call your friendly local Geek. **FG**

BY ANDREW LEIBMAN

Available Services

If it involves your computer, Best Buy's Geek Squad can help. Here's a list of the computer services your local Geek Squad agents can sort out. And they even make house calls.

- Set up and secure your computer
- Perform repairs and upgrades
- Protect and save your data
- A la carte services

Price Breakdown

To get your PC in tip-top shape, Best Buy's Geek Squad offers a range of services that are guaranteed to help you get the most out of your computer.

- Standard Security and Performance Package: \$129 (in-store); \$229 (in-home)
- Advanced Security and Performance: \$149 (in-store); \$249 (in-home)
- Premium Security and Performance: \$179 (in-store); \$299 (in-home)
- Advanced Diagnostic and Repair: \$179 (in-store); \$249 (in-home)
- Advanced Diagnostic, Repair, and Prevention: \$299 (in-store); \$349 (in-home)
- Operating System Upgrade (software not included): \$129 (in-store); \$249 (in-home)
- Network Installation (two devices or computers): \$159 (in-home)
- Single PC Networking Installation: \$89 (in-home)
- Wireless Security Setup: \$59 (in-home); \$49 (remote)
- One-Time Data Backup/Transfer: \$99 (in-store); \$229 (in-home)
- Automated Data Backup: \$129 (in-store); \$229 (in-home)
- Clean and Remove: \$59 (in-store)

COMPILED BY KATHRYN DOLAN

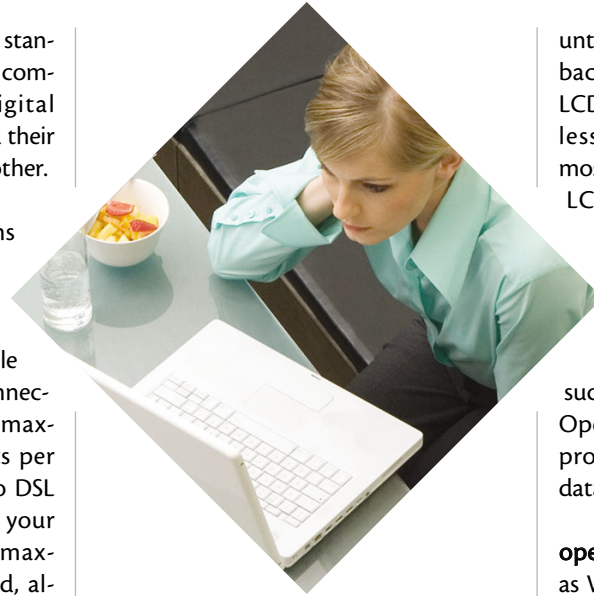
Glossary Of Computing Terms

Bluetooth—A short-range wireless standard that connects devices, such as computers, printers, PDAs, and digital cameras, and allows the devices and their users to communicate with one another.

broadband—Network connections that transmit data at high speeds. Consumers have a few options for accessing the Internet via a broadband connection. If your cable company offers it, you can get connections at speeds with theoretical maximums of 8 to 11Mbps (megabits per second). You can also subscribe to DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) through your phone company; DSL supports maximum speeds of 3 to 5Mbps. And, although not widely available, some power companies are exploring the possibility of offering high-speed Internet access to their customers, as well.

CRT—This older display technology for TVs and computer monitors features an electron gun illuminating phosphor dots that line the inside of a glass tube. When the phosphors are lit, they display the on-screen images. CRTs consume a great deal of power and are heavy and bulky. Additionally, CRTs are an analog technology, so, although many CRTs support digital signals, they degrade when converted to analog.

dual-core processor—This integrated circuit, which controls the computer, features two processors, each with its own cache, on a single die or chassis. In a dual-core configuration, the operating system has two processors to handle instructions, speeding up the computer and its ability to multitask.



Ethernet—A widely used LAN protocol in which computers and networks are physically linked.

firewall—Hardware or software that limits access by a network or another outside source to your computer; it also may limit your computer's access to the network. These security measures are designed to protect your computer from outsiders who'd like to exploit it in some way. By the same token, firewalls may prevent infected files on your computer from accessing the larger network and spreading the problem to other users.

LAN—A group of computers that are physically connected by wires so they can communicate with one another and share information.

LCD—This digital display technology sandwiches liquid crystals between thin sheets of glass. The crystals twist and

untwist to allow and block light from a backlight, forming the images you see. LCDs are thinner, lighter, and consume less power than CRTs. Initially used mostly in notebook PCs, you'll now find LCD TVs and computer monitors, as well as LCDs on digital cameras, cell phones, portable DVD players, and PDAs among others.

office suite—Productivity software, such as Microsoft Office, StarOffice, and Open Office, that often includes word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, database, and financial components.

operating system—The software, such as Windows XP, Windows Vista, or Mac OS X, that controls a computer and its peripherals and serves as the primary interface for the users.

processor—Also known as a microprocessor or the CPU (central processing unit), this integrated circuit controls the computer.

RAM—Random-access memory is a standard type of memory that's read from and written to by the CPU and hardware.

upgradeable—This term refers to the ability to add or swap out hardware to boost a computer's performance, increase its speed, or replace a defective or obsolete device or component. For instance, you may add more memory; replace an old CRT with a widescreen LCD; or swap out an older graphics card for a newer one that features an ATSC TV tuner so you can watch digital TV on your computer. Look for a computer with expansion slots or empty bays.

Which Notebook Computer Is Best For You?

A notebook computer is a pretty big purchase for most people, and it's usually a bit overwhelming, too. This chart compares the features and specs from several models available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) and recommends models based on certain lifestyles.

What It Is	What It Means	Compaq Presario 440 C551NR	Gateway MT6831	HP Pavilion dv9208nr
Operating system	The software (usually Windows or Mac OS X) that controls your computer	Windows Vista Home Basic	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium
Processor	The chip that controls the computer (in general, the bigger the number, the better)	1.86GHz Intel Celeron M 440	1.6GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T5300	1.6GHz AMD Athlon 64 X2
Hard drive size	How much the information the computer can hold	80GB	160GB	120GB
Optical drives	Drives that can read and write discs such as CD-Rs, DVD-RWs, or HD DVDs	DVD-ROM/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW with LightScribe
RAM	Memory that is read from and written to by the processor and hardware; the more, the better	512MB DDR2 SDRAM	2GB PC2-4200 DDR2	1GB PC2-4200 DDR2
Screen size	The diagonal measurement of the notebook's screen	15.4 inches	15.4 inches	17 inches
Media card reader	A slot that lets you use media cards without a separate peripheral	No	Yes	Yes
Coollest feature		Hi-def LCD	4-in-1 media card manager	LightScribe direct-disc labeling
Perfect for		College students or anyone on a budget	Users who work from a home office	Entertainment buffs looking for a desktop replacement
MSRP		From \$449.99	\$1,099.99	From \$949.99



Compaq Presario 440 C551NR
8294259



Gateway MT6831
8310785



HP Pavilion dv9208nr
8216441



Samsung Ultra Mobile PC Q1P
8276974

	Samsung Ultra Mobile PC Q1P	Sony VAIO VGN-FE880E/H	Toshiba Satellite U205-S5057	Apple MacBook MA700LL/A	Apple MacBook Pro MA611LL/A
	Windows XP Tablet PC	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger	Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger
	1GHz Intel Celeron M ULV	1.66GHz Intel Core 2 Duo Mobile	1.66GHz Intel Core 2 Duo Mobile T5500	2GHz Intel Core 2 Duo Mobile	2.33GHz Intel Core 2 Duo Mobile
	60GB	160GB	160GB	80GB	160GB
	None	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW
	1GB PC2-4200 DDR2	2GB PC2-5300 DDR2	1GB PC-4200 DDR2 SDRAM	1GB PC2-5300 DDR2 SDRAM	2GB PC2-5300 DDR2 SDRAM
	7 inches	15.4 inches	12.1 inches	13.3 inches	17 inches
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Size—it's tiny but full-featured	Built-in Web camera	Fingerprint reader	Loaded with software	iSight Web cam
	Users who like to stay connected on the road without extra bulk	Users who like to stay connected to family and friends	Road warriors who need full functionality but a small size	Shutterbugs and amateur video editors	Those looking for a robust, full-featured system that can grow with them
	From \$1,299	\$1,349.99	\$1,299.99	\$1,299	\$2,799



Sony VAIO VGN-FE880E/H
8231246



Toshiba Satellite U205-S5057
8231102



Apple MacBook MA700LL/A
8165219



Apple MacBook Pro MA611LL/A
8154953

Which Desktop PC Is Right For You?

When you shop for a desktop PC, you'll see lots of similar deals. The comparison chart below shows how subtle—yet important—the differences can be. If you can't find one of these on Best Buy's Web site (www.bestbuy.com), visit or call your local Best Buy store, and it should be available there.

What It Is	What It Means	Acer Aspire 4400+ MT500A	Apple Mac mini MA608LL/A	Apple Mac Pro MA356LL/A
Processor	The chip that controls the computer (in general, the bigger the number, the better)	AMD Athlon 64 X2, 2.2GHz	Intel Core Duo; 1.83 GHz	2 Intel Xeon 5100; 2.66GHz
Hard drive size	How much information the computer can hold	320GB	80GB	250GB
RAM	The memory a computer uses to run all PC applications	2GB	512MB	1GB
Optical drives	Drives that can read and write discs such as CD-Rs, DVD-RWs, or HD DVDs	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW
Operating system	The software (usually Windows or Mac OS X) that controls your computer	Windows Vista Home Premium	Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger	Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger
Loaded software	Preinstalled applications for performing specific tasks	Adobe Reader 7; CyberLink PowerDVD; NTI CD Maker Gold	iCal2; Dashboard; Spotlight; Mail 2; iChat AV3	iLive '06; Spotlight; Dashboard; Safari; iCal
Graphics card	Controls the quality of your video and images	Nvidia GeForce 6100	Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 950	Nvidia GeForce 7300 GT
Ports	A socket that gives your computer access to different peripherals	8 (4 front, 4 rear); 1 FireWire; 1 serial; 1 parallel	2 USB; 1 FireWire	5 (USB 2.0); 2 (USB 1.1); 4 FireWire
Best for		Managing multimedia	Style-conscious users in a tight space	Computer power user
Coollest feature		Processor—one of the best on the market	Powerful software (included)	Quad-core processor
Best Buy price (before any rebate)		\$719.99	\$1,859.97	\$2,499.99



Acer Aspire 4400+ MT500A
8276661



Apple Mac mini MA608LL/A
8040283



Apple Mac Pro MA356LL/A
7985978



Compaq Presario SR2170NX
8223077

	Compaq Presario 356 SR2150NX	eMachines 820 T5224	eMachines 925 T5226	Gateway E6320 E6320	Gateway 935 GT5428
	Intel Pentium 4 356, 3.33GHz	Intel Pentium D, 2.8GHz	Intel Pentium D 925, 3GHz	Intel Core 2 Duo, 1.86GHz	Intel Pentium D 935, 3.2GHz
	120GB	250GB	250GB	500GB	250GB
	512MB	1GB	1GB	2GB	1GB
	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW with LightScribe	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD- RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/ CD-RW	Double-layer DVD±RW/ CD-RW
	Windows Vista Home Basic	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium	Windows Vista Home Premium
	Microsoft Works 8, Adobe Reader 7.0, DVD Play	Works 8.5, Adobe Reader 8.0, Money 2006	Works 8.5, Money 2006, Adobe Reader 8.0	Works 8.5, Money 2006, Digital Image Starter, CyberLink Power2Go	Works 8.5, Money 2006, Digital Image Starter, CyberLink Power2Go
	ATI Radeon Xpress 1100	Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 950	Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 950	Nvidia GeForce 7650 GS	Intel Graphics Media Accelerator 950
	4 USB (2 front, 2 rear)	6 USB (2 front, 4 rear); 1 serial; 1 parallel	6 USB (2 front, 4 rear); 1 serial; 1 par- allel	6 USB; 2 FireWire; 1 serial; 1 parallel; 1 S- Video; 1 composite	6 (2 front, 4 rear); 1 serial; 1 parallel
	Digital photo enthusiasts	Entertainment buffs	Everyday productivity	Gamers and TV lovers	The whole family
	LightScribe-enabled DVD burner	Intel Viiv tech- nology	15-in-1 digital media manager	Built-in TV tuner and 8-channel audio	Dual-core processor
	\$464.99	\$544.99	\$529.99	\$1,129.99	\$559.99



eMachines 820 T5224
8208236



eMachines 925 T5226
8297041



Gateway E6320 GM5446E
8297149



Gateway 935 GT5428
8297069

What MP3 Player Is Best For You?

Find Out With This Handy Quiz

The idea of investing in a new MP3 player can be fun and exciting, but there are so many types and models to choose from that fun and excitement can quickly turn to confusion and uncertainty. Take our quiz below and you'll quickly gain a sense of what MP3 player is best for your wants, needs, and lifestyle.

BY KATIE SOMMER

* What do you want to use your MP3 player for?

- Jogging or other types of exercise
- Listening to music every day at the office; maybe viewing video and photos
- Storing files, listening to your entire music library, and watching video

* What kind of content is important for you to store on your player?

- Music only
- Mostly music, but maybe some photos and video
- Definitely music, photos, and video

* How many songs are you looking to store?

- Around 500
- 500 to 5,000
- Over 5,000

* Does battery life mean a lot to you?

- No—I'm confident that I'll charge it frequently
- Sort of, but it's not a deal breaker
- Yes—I'm planning on using it constantly

* How much are you looking to spend on your player?

- Under \$150
- Between \$150 and \$200
- Over \$200

* What is the ideal weight of your MP3 player?

- Very light
- Sort of light
- It's OK if the player is on the heavy side

* Do you want to be able to listen to your music without earphones?

- Nah, earbuds are comfortable
- Maybe, every so often
- Yes, I plan on using it to play music at parties every weekend

Your Score:

Give yourself 0 points for every blue answer, 1 point for every pink, and 2 points for every green.

Add up your answers and see what type of MP3 player is perfect for you.

0 to 4: Flash player. If you score in this range, a smaller-capacity flash-based player is best for you. It's light, relatively inexpensive, won't skip, and can hold enough songs to get you through a couple of days' worth of workouts or a short road trip.

Check out these models: Apple's iPod shuffle (\$79; www.apple.com/ipod) or 2GB nano

(\$149); Creative 1GB Zen V Plus (\$84.99; www.creative.com); Insignia NS-DVB4G (\$159.99; www.bestbuy.com); SanDisk Sansa e250R (\$119.99; www.sandisk.com).

5 to 10: Flash player with more capacity. If you scored in this range, you'll do well with buying a large-capacity flash-based player. Many of these play video and display photos, and most have a great selection of accessory add-ons you can buy

later. However, they're still compact and lightweight and won't skip—or break the bank.

Check out these models: Apple's 8GB iPod nano (\$249); Creative's 8GB Zen V Plus (\$199); Samsung 4GB YP-T9JAB (179.99); SanDisk 8GB Sansa e280R (\$199.99).

10 to 14: Hard drive player. Scorers in this range will want something with more storage space. A hard drive player is usually a bit bigger, heavier, and

more expensive than its flash counterpart, but you'll get much more storage space, an excellent selection of accessories (especially if you choose an iPod), and a gorgeous, relatively large LCD.

Check out these models: Apple's iPod (30GB is \$249.99; 80GB is \$349.99); Creative 30GB Zen Vision: M (\$249.99) and 30GB Zen Vision W (\$299.99); Microsoft 30GB Zune (\$249.99). ●



Courtesy of Apple

iPod Accessory Must-Haves

Deck Out Your iPod



ou finally bought the iPod you've been making eye contact with during your last few visits to Best Buy. You have your new portable pal, but now the fun really begins: Part of the excitement of owning an iPod is getting all the goodies that go with it. Accessories range from simple and inexpensive, such as cases, earbuds, and armbands, to higher-end gadgets, such as FM transmitters, portable speakers, charging docks, and voice recorders. Though we can't cover every type of iPod accessory, we've rounded up some of our favorite must-haves. **PG**

BY LINNÉ OURADA



Griffin Centerstage (\$24.99; www.griffintechology.com)

Cases

We consider cases an iPod necessity—they keep our iPods safe by protecting them from those clumsy moments we all have. Some cases feature belt clips or lanyards so your iPod can easily tag along during your everyday tasks. In addition, cases add a touch of style. If you're looking to shield your iPod from the scratches and scuffs of everyday use, Apple iPod nano Tubes (\$29.99; www.apple.com) will do a fine job. These silicone cases fit snugly around your nano to keep out the dirt and dust, and we love that they come as a set of five colors, so you can dress your iPod to match your mood. For

added protection for the screen and Click Wheel, consider a case that has a flip cover, such as Belkin's Folio Case for iPod nano (\$19.99 for white, blue, and pink; \$24.99 for black; www.belkin.com). This case's durable, fine-grain leather design reminds us more of a small, stylish wallet. For 5G iPod owners, Griffin's Centerstage (\$24.99; www.griffintechology.com) includes an aluminum flip-cover that doubles as a sturdy stand, so you can easily prop it on your desk to enjoy hands-free viewing of videos or your favorite TV shows during your lunch hour.

Armbands

One of the main perks of owning an iPod shuffle or nano is having a loyal workout companion. Lanyards suffice for mild exercise, but when it's time to really get things moving, you'll want to slide your player into a secure armband so you don't have to mess with tangled cords or worry about dropping your player. The one-size-fits-all DLO Action Jacket is available for the 2G shuffle (\$19.99), nano (\$29.99), and 5G iPod (\$29.99). The shuffle and nano designs have a clear vinyl window to protect the player from dirt and sweat. We also like Griffin's Tempo for the iPod and iPod nano (\$24.99). This armband has an external headphone jack for easy access and features reflective strips of material that'll come in handy during those sunset jogs.



DLO Action Jacket for 2G iPod shuffle
(\$19.99; www.dlo.com)

FM Transmitters

You probably listen to your playlists just about everywhere—at work, when you exercise, on vacation, at the grocery store—so, of course, you want to listen in your car, too. That's why you need an FM transmitter. These devices let you wirelessly transmit your iPod's music through your car stereo using empty FM frequencies. Most FM transmitters have integrated car chargers, as well. There are car adapters strictly for charging your iPod, but why not spend a little extra and get a double deal?

Some FM transmitters have very few preset frequencies; others have a range of frequencies. The Monster iCarPlay Wireless 200 FM Transmitter (\$99.95; www.monstercable.com) has an Auto-Scan feature that automatically finds the clearest frequencies, so you can concentrate on the road. The \$79.99 DLO TransPod is an FM transmitter and a cup holder cradle. Both plug into the cigarette lighter and have integrated chargers. However, be sure to check compatibility—some FM transmitters are for specific iPod models, such as Griffin's iTrip nano (\$49.99; for 2G nano), but most are compatible with any dockable iPod.



DLO TransPod
(\$79.99; www.dlo.com)

Docks & Speakers

If you want to share your tunes, videos, and photos, docks and speakers will make your iPod a sure hit at your next barbecue.

The Apple iPod Universal Dock (\$39) is a good investment for households with multiple iPod owners because it includes five adapters. It charges and syncs your iPod, and you can use it to watch videos on your TV or play music on your home audio system. The DLO Home Dock Deluxe (\$149.99) is a similar device, and it features a remote control and on-screen navigation, so you can see your iPod's menu on your television.

If you like to hear your music loud and clear, then pairing your iPod with portable speakers is for you. Most iPod portable speaker systems include integrated docks, so you can charge your iPod as you share its tunes. The iLive Portable Music System (\$129.99; www.ilive.net) is an all-in-one boom box that works with most iPods. It features a charging cradle, a remote control, a CD player and radio, a digital clock, and more. Best of all, its subwoofers will really get your playlist thumping.



iLive Portable Music System (\$129.99; www.ilive.net)

Ready, Set, Accessorize!

With an estimated 4,000-plus iPod accessories available, you shouldn't have any trouble making your iPod truly your own. If you find yourself craving more iPod extras, get out there and add to your collection: extra batteries, remotes, skins, charging kits, car mounts . . . should we keep going? So, what are you waiting for? Get to accessorizing. ●



Samsung SDH-d900 Black Carbon
\$329.99 • www.samsung.com

How To Pick A Cell Phone

Get The Right One For You

LCD and main buttons are always available on the front of the phone. To access the keypad, just slide the top up. Flip, swivel, and slider phones offer better keypad protection, but candy bar phones tend to be sturdier.

take her office on the road will want to consider a smartphone loaded with productivity software. A good example is the BlackBerry Pearl (\$299.99; www.blackberry.com), with a QWERTY keyboard and all your office needs packed into a small and stylish form factor. Other available features to consider are an MP3 or music player, two-way radio, text messaging, streaming video playback, hands-free capabilities, still and video image capture, and Web access. When looking at features and capabilities, just remember that many of them come with additional fees.

There are many choices to make when selecting a new cell phone. The best way to start narrowing the field is to select a service provider. Not all carriers offer the same types of phones, so choosing a provider will limit your options. Once you have a provider that works best in your area, fits into your budget, and matches your usage habits, you're ready for the phone. We'll help you choose the one with the right blend of style, features, and performance.

Style

The two traditional styles of phone, flip and candy bar, have recently been joined by two additional choices: the swivel and slider. We especially like the Samsung SGH-d900 Black Carbon slider (\$329.99; www.samsung.com). The large

Some additional things to consider are the size of the keys and the placement of buttons and controls. Someone with large hands or who sends a lot of text messages will want a finger-friendly keypad—or maybe even a phone that features a QWERTY keyboard. Try the phone before you buy it so you're sure it feels comfortable for you. And if you want to make a fashion statement, get a phone that offers different color or cover options.

Features

To make sure you don't get a phone with more (or less) features than you really need, make a list of must-haves. A casual user will need little more than a basic phone with a contact list and camera. But a professional who needs to

Performance

The two major things to consider in this category are battery life and call quality. Especially if you plan to use your cell phone as your primary phone, get one with a battery that can sustain over three hours of talk time and five days on a single charge. If possible, test the phone's volume levels and clarity in your area. Many providers offer a money-back guarantee so you can try the phone before committing to it. A phone's performance is often linked to the quality of the service provider's network. If you have spotty service but love your phone, check into other plans that will let you change service providers but keep your phone and number. **FG**

To make sure you don't get a phone with more (or less) features than you really need, make a list of must-haves.

BY JENNIE SCHLUETER

Wireless Shopping Tips

A Cell Phone Case

BY KATHRYN DOLAN

Naturally, because cell phones are small and portable, we take them everywhere. As a result, our phones get scratched, dropped, and even left behind. Cases protect our phones from the usual knocks and bumps and, sometimes, make them easier to carry. Here are some things to keep in mind as you shop.

Some cases let you access your phone's features while still protecting the phone. There are cases, however, that are designed solely for protection, and you'll have to take your phone out of the case to use it. This type of case is practical if you infrequently make and receive calls. If your cell phone has replaced your landline, however, you probably don't want a protective case from which you'll have to remove your phone every time you want to use it.

You'll find some universal cell phone cases, but typically, cases are made to fit certain models of phones. Make sure the case you have your eye on will accommodate your cell phone. For instance, the phone-fitting Body Glove Scuba II Cellsuit (\$24.99; www.bodyglove.com) will protect your Motorola RAZR V3 from scratches and splashes, although you won't want to immerse your phone in water. You can use your phone while it's in the case, too.

Make sure you (or your tween-aged daughter) find the case's looks appealing. The little purse-like V3 Fashion Case (Light Pink, \$24.99; www.store.motorola.com) will accommodate your daughter's new Motorola RAZR. Before leaving for school, she can remove the strap

and put the case in her backpack so the Fashion Case can protect her phone from the inevitable jostling it'll receive.

If your job requires you to have your phone on your person at all times, you may like a case that you can attach to a belt loop or purse strap. The Palm Treo Leather Side Case (\$39.99; store.palm.com) is a small, unobtrusive case that protects and holds Treo 600 and 700 series models. The case has an interior pocket so you can keep a few of your business cards handy, too.

Although we're not encouraging you to talk on the phone while driving, there are times you need your phone in a hurry. Digging through your pockets or briefcase or attempting to retrieve the phone from the floor where it slid as you rounded that last curve may prove a bigger distraction than talking, so a case that lets you keep your phone near makes sense. The Case Logic Automotive Catch All (\$4; www.caselogic.com) is a small, neoprene bag available in black, gray, or tan that'll also hold sunglasses or a small pad of paper and a pen. The Catch All has an adjustable hook on the back so you can hang your phone from an air vent near you.

SHOPPING CHECKLIST

☐ Can you use your cell phone while it's in the case?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

☐ Will the case you want accommodate your cell phone model?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

☐ What about the cases' looks?

- ☐ An embarrassment
☐ Aesthetically pleasing

☐ Does the case have a clip so you can carry it on a belt or purse strap?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

☐ Can you free your phone in a hurry?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

CUT HERE

Music Players

5 Must-Have Accessories

Nailing down a list of must-have accessories for an MP3 player is tricky. Just because an iPod dock for the kitchen tops your list, for example, doesn't mean it even cracks an avid jogger's Top 5. Ultimately, though, five general categories stand out, although other notable accessories include extra batteries, cleaning kits, and Bluetooth adapters.

1. Headphones.

A runner sometimes doesn't fare well with earbuds. They fall out due to the constant jostle of running, and this can become a burden for anyone hoping to get in a good workout. It's essential to match your earphones to your needs, or your experience will be diminished. A runner should opt for a headphone that's secure, and in this case, an in-the-ear earbud would be the ideal choice. Headphone styles are numerous and include wired/wireless earbuds, which are perfect for mobile users (students, mass transit users), and earcups, which can satisfy any audiophile's need to hear minute musical details.

2. Speakers/docks.

Whether you're making sandcastles on the beach, taking your camper out to the lake, or organizing a picnic with the entire family, there's no boundary to where you can listen to your MP3 player. It doesn't need to be limited to the pair of headphones it came with, and portable speakers and docks are perfect for listening to tunes in open areas. In addition, most speakers have a dock to recharge your player's battery. Check your MP3 player manufacturer's Web site for model numbers of available speakers and docks, and you'll likely be able to buy it at Best Buy.

3. FM transmitter.

If you're motoring about in a truck or Trans Am for leisure or work, MP3 players can provide the soundtrack for that motion. To do so, you'll need an FM transmitter that can beam your MP3 player's tunes over your car radio. Connect the transmitter to your player, tune in to a designated frequency on the car radio dial, tune to that same frequency on your transmitter, and you are listening to music, movies, podcasts, audiobooks, etc. Transmitters range from basic (maybe offering three presets) to sophisticated models (providing remote controls and visual interfaces), making it easy to find one that suits your needs.

4. Cases.

So you decided to splurge and purchase a high-end MP3 player. Because you've already spent so much, it's only right to assume that you've got everything you need, right? Not quite. Although they're partially a vanity purchase, cases can also protect your player from scratches, bumps, water, physical drops, and mishaps that can otherwise shorten your player's life. However, no matter what type of MP3 player you own, it's wise to purchase a case to protect it in different environments. Cases are relatively inexpensive (around \$20 and up) and can provide a little more insurance for any

accidents or normal wear and tear that can happen. Because not all cases work with all players, check your player's Web site or a retailer like Best Buy for ones that hold your MP3 player.

5. Armbands.

We all know that music is a huge exercise motivator. Although they're often overlooked, armbands can mean a difference between a workout you're proud of vs. one that's constantly interrupted by accidental drops and tugging, tangled cords. No matter your sport, an armband, such as Griffin's Tempo (\$24.99; www.griffin-technology.com), which fits around your bicep, generally offers the most stability and comfort. Otherwise, a basic lanyard is an inexpensive, yet effective, alternative for less-strenuous workouts. **FG**

BY BLAINE FLAMIG



MP3 Players

Top 5 Things To Know

Finding the right digital music player is all about asking the right questions. DRM (digital rights management) and other competing standards have made it tougher than ever to find a player that will meet all of your needs, but here are the five most important things to keep in mind while shopping, along with the answers you'll want to hear before committing to a particular device.

1 Memory capacity.

The theoretical capacities listed for most MP3 players were based on audio recorded at low quality, which makes small file sizes. Songs recorded at higher quality, which is probably what you'll be listening to most often, will take up more space, so you'll fit fewer songs on the player. For example, a player can store three times as many songs recorded at 64Kbps as those at 192Kbps, but the sound quality for the 192Kbps tracks is more than three times better than that of the 64Kbps tracks.

Where storage is concerned, there are eight bits in a byte, 1,024 bytes in a KB (kilobyte), 1,024KB in a MB (megabyte), and 1,024MB in a GB (gigabyte). If you record tracks at 192Kbps, divide that number by eight to get 24KBps. There are 60 seconds in a minute, so that means your audio requires about 1,440KB (1.41MB) of storage per minute or about 84.5MB per hour. Therefore,

each gigabyte of memory will hold about 12 hours of 192Kbps audio.

2 Type of memory.

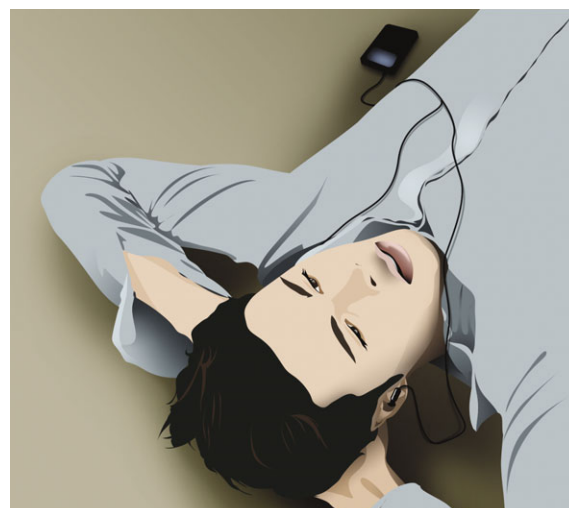
Hard drives offer relatively high storage capacities at a relatively inexpensive price, but they have a lot of moving parts that tend to break if you drop the device while jogging, which often ruins the player beyond repair. Flash memory (also called solid-state memory) is more expensive per megabyte and gigabyte than hard drives, but because the memory uses no moving parts, it is more durable. Devices that use flash memory are terrific for running or other activities where you may shake or drop your player.

3 File format support.

Just as digital photos and movies use a variety of file formats, so do digital audio files. You'll see MP3, AAC (Advanced Audio Coding), WMA (Windows Media Audio), and FLAC (Free Lossless Audio Codec), to name a few. If you have already converted or downloaded a large amount of music in a particular format, make sure the player you want can handle it. If not, you can tailor your conversions and downloads to match the capabilities of the device.

4 File downloads.

This is a biggie. Due to conflicting DRM schemes and other factors, to download



tracks directly from Apple's iTunes Store (www.itunes.com), you'll need an iPod. Several subscription-based services, such as Napster To Go (www.napster.com), which let you download unlimited amounts of music to a particular player, are only compatible with certain makes and models. Look for the PlaysForSure or Works With Napster To Go logos when shopping to find devices that are compatible with your favorite services.

5 Battery life.

Official battery life measurements are performed in a laboratory and, as a consequence, don't always match real-world performance. First, ask the salespeople if they have any experience with the battery life of a product you are considering. Then, be sure to ask how long the batteries should last if you listen at a reasonable volume level (loud music consumes more electricity because the headphones require more power). Finally, you might also look for power-cutting options, such as the ability to turn off the screen's backlight and audio normalization (which tones down loud music). **FG**

BY TRACY BAKER

MP3 Player Glossary

Who doesn't want an MP3 player? It can help you relax, provide motivation, and keep you up-to-date on news. When you head to your local Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) to snag one, make sure you have this glossary so you can choose the perfect model.

AAC—Short for Advanced Audio Coding, it is a competitor of the more popular MP3 file format.

Click Wheel—Apple's proprietary circular control on the front of the iPod.

download—In terms of digital music, downloading is when you retrieve a song from an Internet site or another network connection and save it to your computer or music player. You'll download songs from music service Web sites such as iTunes, Napster, or Rhapsody.

DRM—Digital rights management is a security mechanism for digital media. A common DRM scheme for digital music involves getting a license file to authorize playback of a free or purchased song.

earbuds—Small, circular devices you put into your ears that serve the same function as headphones. MP3 players come with their own earbuds, but you can, of course, purchase a separate pair that are more comfortable or of better quality.

flash memory—Solid-state memory with no moving parts that is lightweight and small. In terms of MP3 players, a flash-based player is lighter and smaller than a hard drive-based player, and it also won't skip. Thus, flash-based players are popular for use during exercising. However, the capacity of a flash drive isn't as large as a hard drive.

FM tuner—In MP3 players, a built-in FM tuner lets you listen to local radio.

hard drive—Storage in which rigid platters are inside a fixed casing. In terms of MP3 players, a hard drive-based player is larger and heavier than a flash-based player. Because of the moving parts (the platters), hard drive-based players are also prone to skipping. However, the capacities are much larger than flash-drive capacities.

iTunes—A digital media player application that loads onto your computer and lets you play, organize, and download and purchase music, videos,

podcasts, and television shows for an iPod or computer.

MP3—Perhaps the most popular digital audio encoding format. It compresses audio to about one-twelfth the original size while still providing excellent sound. In general, a 1MB MP3 file will last about one minute.

playlist—A queue of songs a user creates to play on a computer, burn to a CD, or transfer to a digital audio player. The playlist includes only directions to the location of the songs, not the songs themselves.

PlaysForSure—A popular Microsoft certification that ensures portable devices, such as MP3 players, and media, such as digital music and videos, are compatible with each other.

podcast—A downloadable episode that is similar to a radio program. A user can subscribe to a podcast for updated episodes, or she can download podcasts one at a time. A podcast is usually available in MP3 format.

screen—The display on the front of a portable music player. A player's screen can either display in color or black and white.

WMA—Windows Media Audio is a digital audio format created by Microsoft to compete with the MP3 format. WMA files are smaller than MP3 files.

widescreen—A screen with a 16:9 aspect ratio. In terms of music players, the Microsoft Zune and the Creative Zen Vision W are two that have wide screens.



Which MP3 Player Is Best For You?

Pods are cool, sure, but you have other choices when it comes to listening to your tunes. This chart compares the most important—and coolest—features from select MP3 players available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com).

		Hard Drive		
What It Is	What It Means	Apple iPod	Creative Zen Vision W	Creative Zen Vision: M
Memory type	Hard drive (moving parts, more capacity) or flash (no moving parts, lightweight, perfect for exercising)	Hard drive	Hard drive	Hard drive
Capacities	How much memory the player has (on models available at Best Buy)	30GB, 80GB	30GB	30GB
Songs	How many songs the player can hold	7,500; 20,000 (based on 4 minutes per song at 128Kbps AAC)	7,500 (based on 4 minutes per song at 128Kbps WMA)	7,500 (based on 4 minutes per song at 128Kbps WMA)
Video capability	Some MP3 players can play video, as well as music	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colors	Several players offer a variety of color choices	Black, white	Black	Black, white, blue, pink, green
FM tuner	Lets you listen to radio stations	No	Yes	Yes
Music services supported	Not all MP3 players can play songs from all music services	iTunes	AOL Music Now, Yahoo! Music, Napster, Soundbuzz, Audible.com	AOL Music Now, Yahoo! Music, Napster, Soundbuzz, Audible.com
Battery life	How long the battery will last when playing music	14 hours; 20 hours	13 hours	14 hours
Perfect for		Those interested in a storage device as much as a music player	Portable video buffs	Users who like to get their music from a variety of sources
Coolest feature		It's an iPod: Need we say more?	Widescreen (16:9) LCD	Included Personal Organizer software
MSRP		\$249; \$349	\$299.99	\$249.99



Apple iPod
8046072



Creative Zen Vision W
8043761



Creative Zen Vision: M
7657555



Microsoft Zune
8330521

Flash

	Microsoft Zune	Apple iPod nano	Insignia NS-DVB4G	Samsung YP-T9JAB	SanDisk Sansa e280R
	Hard drive	Flash	Flash	Flash	Flash
	30GB	2GB, 4GB, 8GB	4GB	4GB	8GB
	7,500 (based on 4 minutes per song at 128Kbps WMA)	500; 1,000; 2,000 (based on 4 minutes per song at 128Kbps AAC)	1,000 (based on 4-minute songs at 128Kbps WMA)	1,000 (based on 4-minute songs at 128Kbps WMA)	2,000 (based on 4-minute songs at 128Kbps WMA)
	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Black, white, brown, pink	Black, silver, pink, blue, green	Black	Black	Black
	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Zune Marketplace	iTunes	Best Buy Digital Music Store	Best Buy Digital Music Store; Rhapsody	Best Buy Digital Music Store; Napster; Rhapsody
	14 hours	24 hours	20 hours	30 hours	20 hours
	Users who enjoy sharing and who might be hard on their devices	Joggers; iPod lovers who aren't interested in carrying their entire library with them	Active music lovers who don't want to mess with earphone wires	Budget-conscious music lovers; kids	Folks who want more features, such as video and an FM tuner, than an iPod nano
	Wi-Fi lets you share music with other Zune users	Diminutive size	Bluetooth capability	Photo-organization tools	MicroSD expansion slot for more memory
	\$249.99	\$149; \$199; \$249	\$159.99	\$179.99	\$249.99



Apple iPod nano
8046081



Insignia NS-DVB4G
8224851



Samsung YP-T9JAB
7994879



SanDisk Sansa e280R
8026254

Which Cell Phone Is Right For You?

Your cell phone is more than a phone—it can be a camera, music player, text messenger, and fashion statement. All these features and more make the cell phone the must-have electronics device. Compare the features of cell phones available at Best Buy (www.bestbuy.com) to help find your next phone, and we provide Best Buy's pricing (as of press time), as well.

What It Is	What It Means	Cingular SYNC a707	LG Cherry Red Chocolate	Motorola RAZR V3m, Silver
Form	The physical style of the phone	Clamshell, internal antenna	Slider, internal antenna	Clamshell, stub antenna
Bluetooth capability	Enables wireless communication with other devices	Yes	Yes	Yes
Internationally compatible	Uses GSM standard used in Europe and Asia	Yes	No	No
Voice-activated dialing	Hands-free dialing	No	Yes	Yes
MP3 player	Plays digital music	Yes	Yes	No
Service plan provider(s)	What provider(s) the phone will work with	Cingular	Verizon	Verizon
Dimensions	Thickness and weight	0.8 inches; 3.7 ounces	0.69 inches; 3.53 ounces	0.5 inches; 3.5 ounces
Battery talk time	How long you can talk between charges	4 hours	3 hours	3.3 hours
Perfect For		Those with lots of contacts; phone book holds 1,000	Style-conscious music lovers	Those who want full functionality in a small form factor
Cooler feature		2MP camera	Can record calls up to 1 minute	VCAST music and video downloads
Best Buy price (original; with service plan)		\$349.99; \$29.99	\$299.99; \$59.99	\$249.99; \$0



Cingular SYNC a707



LG Cherry Red Chocolate



Motorola RAZR V3m



Motorola MOTO KRZR K1m

	Motorola MOTO KRZR K1m	Pantech C300	Samsung A930	Sanyo Katana Blue Sapphire	Sony Ericsson W300i Walkman
	Clamshell, internal antenna	Clamshell, stub antenna	Clamshell, internal antenna	Clamshell, internal antenna	Clamshell, internal antenna
	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	No	Yes	No	No	No
	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
	Verizon, Sprint PCS, Cingular	Cingular	Verizon	Sprint PCS	Cingular
	0.67 inches; 3.63 ounces	0.76 inches; 2.41 ounces	0.98 inches; 3.98 ounces	0.58 inches; 3.4 ounces	0.9 inches; 3.3 ounces
	4.16 hours	3.5 hours	3 hours	3 hours	9 hours
	RAZR lovers	Those who want a very small phone	Multitaskers	Those who don't want to listen to music on their phones	Music lovers who want long battery life
	Glossy good looks	Flashlight	1.3MP swivel camera captures 10 minutes of video	Large, very bright external and internal displays	FM radio
	\$249.99; depends on provider	\$149.99; \$0	\$299.99; \$0	\$279.99; \$0	\$199.99; \$0



Pantech C300



Samsung A930



Sanyo Katana Blue Sapphire



Sony Ericsson W300i Walkman

exit Road Trip

If you're hitting the pavement for a road trip this summer, be sure to bring along some goodies in your car. These items from Best Buy and www.BestBuy.com will help create a memorable car ride your family and friends will talk about for years to come.



Nintendo DS Lite

A good way to pass the time through the plains.
\$129.99

Sony Handycam DVD Camcorder Model DCR-DVD108

In case you ever forget what the "Area's Largest Ball Of String" looks like.
\$399.99

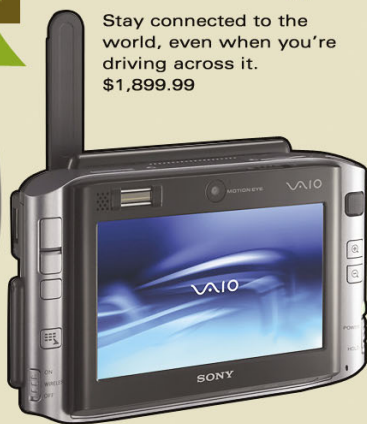


Lowepro CompuDay-pack Notebook and Camera Bag

With plenty of room for snacks.
\$80.99

Sony VAIO Micro PC with Intel® Centrino® Mobile Technology

Stay connected to the world, even when you're driving across it.
\$1,899.99



Freeplay Energy Sherpa Xray LED Self-Powered Flashlight

It's probably pretty hard to change a tire in the dark.
\$34.99



Bushnell ImageView 10 x 25 Digital Binoculars with Built-In Digital Camera

One can never be too prepared for a Bigfoot sighting.
\$120.99



Manfrotto-Bogen Modo Mono Monopod

It sure beats trying to take a photo out of the car window.
\$39.99



Griffin iTrip FM Transmitter for Apple® iPod™

In case you feel like musically enlightening the rest of the car.
\$50.99



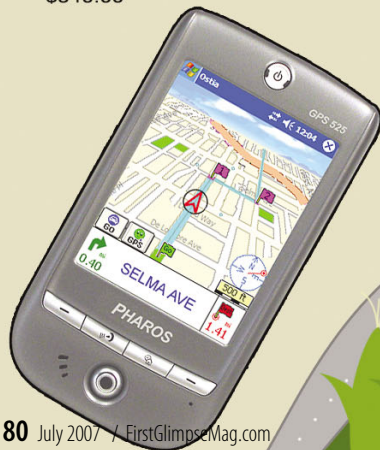
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